

Al-Ahram

Weekly



Field Marshal
Tawfiq Tawfik,
portrait of the
week by
Bahgory.....p. 8

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Quake rocks region

AN EARTHQUAKE with a magnitude of at least 5.7 on the Richter scale shook Egypt and other countries in the Middle East yesterday, swaying buildings and sending hundreds of frightened people into the streets.

A 40-year-old woman was killed under the debris of her collapsed three-storey house near the town of El-Santa in the Nile Delta province of Gharbiya. In Cairo, several old buildings cracked in the districts of Sharabiya, Ezbeikiya, Abdin, Old Cairo and Boulaq but there were no reports of casualties.

Five residents of the western port of Paphos in Cyprus were slightly injured and a number of buildings suffered mild damage, state-run Cyprus radio said.

The tremor struck at 3.11 pm and was centred off the southwestern coast of Cyprus. It was also felt in Israel, the Occupied Territories, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Greece.

Rebecca Phipps, a spokeswoman for the US Geological Survey in Reston, Virginia, said the earthquake measured 6.4 on the Richter scale. The British Geological Survey said it registered 6.5 but Egypt's Helwan Observatory put the magnitude at 5.7.

The Middle East News agency said President Hosni Mubarak telephoned Dr Venice Kamel Gouda, minister of state for scientific research, to inquire about the magnitude and epicentre of the quake. Mubarak kept in touch with "all concerned bodies" and was kept informed about details of the situation.

Prime Minister Kamel El-Ganzouri and Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif also telephoned Gouda to make similar inquiries.

Gouda said the quake was centred south of Cyprus and preliminary readings by Egyptian seismological stations put its magnitude at between 5.7 and 6 points on the Richter scale.

People ran into the streets of Cairo, fearing that some of the city's old buildings might collapse. Telephone lines were disrupted briefly in parts of the capital.

An earthquake measuring 6.2 hit the Gulf of Aqaba last November, damaging several buildings and properties in Jordan, Egypt and Israel. At least eight people were killed.

A quake that struck Cairo on 12 October 1992 killed more than 450 people, injured 4,000 and caused extensive damage to buildings.

A quake of magnitude 6 can cause severe damage if it is centred under a populated area. Magnitude 7 indicates a major earthquake capable of widespread, heavy damage.

Weizman visit

ISRAELI President Ezer Weizman will make a one-day official visit to Egypt on Monday for talks with President Hosni Mubarak on the troubled peace process and tension between Israel and Egypt.

Weizman's office announced yesterday that the visit comes in response to an invitation by Mubarak. Weizman, whose post is largely ceremonial, hosted Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Tuesday at his home in Caesarea, northern Israel.

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RED-HANDED: Al-Ahram Weekly's Randa Shaath captured the destruction of the Garden City villa weeks ago. Next week a two-page profile of the district will feature more photos

The villain and the villa

SCATTERED throughout nearly all of Cairo's districts are architectural milestones testifying to the city's millennium-long history. While some are, obviously, in better shape than others, these buildings have, on the whole, withstood the test of time and nature. But, as the opulent El-Morgani Pasha's villa discovered the hard way, they are no match for a keen business eye and a bulldozer. This turn-of-the-century villa, located on Dar El-Shefa St, in the tree-lined Cairo district of Garden City, is but the latest victim to the urbanisation and demolition craze.

Egged on by soaring land prices, the new owner of the villa apparently saw that LE15 million (approximate value of the land) was incentive enough to skip the necessary demolition permit and to violate a ministerial decree issued by Prime Minister Kamel El-Ganzouri banning the demolition of historically and architecturally significant villas and palaces. The owner, however, was thoughtful enough to demolish the building very carefully so as not to damage the rococo-style villa's marble walls and stairs, which, demolition workers said, were later sold for LE200,000.

Although demolition work on the villa began two months ago, it was only brought to the prime minister's attention during the last few days, said sources at the Cabinet. El-Ganzouri immediately sent President Hosni Mubarak a report revealing the transgression. Mubarak, on Tuesday, issued a decree, dismissing the deputy governor for Western Cairo and suspending, for dereliction of duty, the head of the West Cairo district.

And while the president's move should, in the future, serve to deter similar cases of "negligence" on the part of officials and contractors, for the villa, which is now reduced to rubble, it serves as an angry reminder that without vigilance, history could find that it has no place in the present.

Talks snag on re-negotiations

Hebron's settlers veto the peace, as Israel persists in trying to re-negotiate the Oslo Accords, while maintaining that it isn't

Amid reports that Palestinian-Israeli talks had snagged over Israel's redeployment from Hebron, the special US envoy to the negotiations said both sides were making a "serious effort" to reach an agreement.

In a statement issued yesterday, US Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross said Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met for over three hours of talks on Hebron Tuesday evening. The talks are being held at the Erez checkpoint, the crossing between the autonomous Gaza Strip and Israel. "They are making a serious effort to understand each other's concerns," Ross said, adding that additional talks were scheduled for yesterday.

Ross shuttled between top Israeli and Palestinian officials in an apparent attempt to break the deadlock. He met in Jerusalem with Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and then drove to Gaza City for a meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

"I think what's most important is to see if we can translate the sense of understanding of concerns on each side into a set of understandings about how to move forward," Ross said after the meeting with Mordechai. "We're obviously not there yet."

Arafat warned that unless Israel showed more flexibility

the talks were heading for failure. "I am not sure that we will be able to accomplish anything in the talks unless the Israeli government changes its position and honours the agreements it has already signed. No one expects that," Arafat said in an interview.

Israel radio quoted an unnamed senior Palestinian official as saying the differences between the two sides were so serious that another meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Arafat might be necessary to bridge the gap.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army announced that 10,000 Palestinian workers are now allowed to return to their jobs in Israel but journalists at the Erez crossing said few workers crossed yesterday — apparently because they did not yet have permits.

In the talks with the Palestinians, Israel is asking for adjustments in security arrangements to protect 450 Jewish settlers living in the West Bank city of Hebron, home to some 94,000 Palestinians.

Israeli negotiators sought to reduce the size of the Palestinian police force due to take control of parts of Hebron and insisted they be armed with pistols rather than automatic rifles.

"We told them we don't want to change any article of the agreement that we signed on Hebron. We reject the principle of what they raised," said Hassan Asfour, a senior Palestinian negotiator.

The agreement signed with Israel's previous Labour government called for Israel to pull the bulk of its troops out of Hebron while providing security for the settlers that Netanyahu contends is not adequate.

Israeli news reports quoted Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat as saying that if appropriate security cannot be provided for the Jewish community, Israel would have to evacuate them from Hebron.

The real problem in the negotiations is that Israel is trying to redraw the agreement to fit the settlers. Why doesn't it try to make an agreement to fit the 8 million Palestinians and Israelis? Erekat told Reuters.

"There are also Palestinian security concerns. These settlers are responsible for all the problems and the massacres," he told the 88-member Palestinian Legislative Council in a reference to a Jewish settler's massacre of 29 Palestinian worshippers at Hebron's Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in 1994.

"I wonder if any Israeli would like to have these settlers

as his neighbour," Erekat said.

Declaring the talks faced a "true crisis," Erekat called on the United States to actively intervene to avert a total breakdown. "The American side is called upon to oblige the Israelis to implement agreements" providing for the Hebron redeployment, he said.

Israel was to have withdrawn from Hebron last March but the pullout was delayed by a series of suicide bombings in February and March and was further postponed after Netanyahu defeated Shimon Peres in Israel's elections in May. Arafat paid his first public visit to Israel on Tuesday, pledging to keep Palestinian police from firing again on Israeli soldiers.

Sitting in garden chairs on the terrace of Israeli President Ezer Weizman's villa in Caesarea, Arafat and Weizman traded compliments, shook hands for the cameras and agreed there was no alternative to peace.

The cordial luncheon and Arafat's promises contrasted sharply with the deep discord evident in the talks at Erez.

Arafat proposed moving the negotiations to Eilat, Israel's southern Red Sea port, or to Tabah, an Egyptian resort just across the border, in order to hold "continuous talks" away from the media spotlight.

Analysis

Likud coalition in distress

The key to understanding Netanyahu lies less in the enigma of his policies than in the fragility of the Israeli leader's ruling coalition, writes **Graham Usher** from Jerusalem

After a week of the worst violence ever seen in the Occupied Territories, Palestinian-Israeli negotiations resumed on 6 October in a last-ditch effort to salvage the Oslo peace process. At the first meeting, it was agreed to form three committees on Israel's stalled redeployment in Hebron, on economic relations and on military-civil matters. But all are aware that the critical issue is Hebron.

On his whistle-stop trip to Israel and Gaza on the day of the negotiations, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher pledged that the two sides would negotiate "within the four corners" of the existing agreement on Hebron. Israel's Foreign Minister, David Levy, says he is convinced that the security "adjustments" Israel is seeking in Hebron "can be carried out within the framework of the existing agreement, that it is not a matter of renegotiating or opening the agreement." After 100-plus days of stalling on Hebron by the Likud government, such reassurances cut little ice with the PLO leader. "We will wait and see," said Arafat, coolly, on the eve of the negotiations.

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are also waiting. Apart from an incident on 2 October in which the Israeli army shot dead one Palestinian and wounded four outside a village near Hebron, the territories were tense but quiet last week. One reason was that by 8 October the army had lifted most of the internal closure it imposed on Gaza and the West Bank, although tanks and helicopter gunships are still in place around the cities of Nablus and Hebron. But the main cause is that the confrontations two weeks ago between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority's security forces have massively strengthened Arafat's stature among Palestinians.

A call issued by the Palestinian opposition group Hamas on 3 October in Lebanon for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories to engage in "total confronta-

tion" with the Israeli army and settlers was met with a wholly derisory response. After a total of 68 Palestinians and 15 Israelis dead, the mood in the territories is one of national unity behind (rather than internal conflict with) their leadership, with most Palestinians abiding by Arafat's instructions to observe patience and quiet during the negotiations. But quiet should not be mistaken for submission. "All the elements are there for the people to explode again," says the Gaza-based human rights activist, Raji Sourani. "The Israelis have not diffused the situation."

The situation can only be diffused if Arafat gets tangible results from the negotiations, principally (as he himself expressed it) "precise implementation" of redeployment in Hebron as well as the other outstanding issues from Oslo's interim phase. These now have become the bloodiest of redlines for Palestinians and the Arab world generally. Arafat's dilemma is that to keep them he requires Netanyahu to move with him. And the Israeli leader's moves remain as enigmatic as ever.

Since his election victory, Netanyahu has conveyed a dual policy vis-à-vis the peace process which, in sum, amounts to no policy at all. On the one hand, he has repeatedly vowed to honour Israel's commitments under Oslo. On the other, he has kept his pre-election promises to expand Jewish settlements in the West Bank, reject the idea of a Palestinian state and keep Jerusalem united "forever" under Israeli sovereignty.

It was these conflicting signals that made his decision to open the tunnel in Jerusalem so incendiary rather than the decision per se. As the territories become engulfed in virtual war, the hope was that Netanyahu would realise that he could either wreck Oslo or uphold it, but that he could no longer do both. The realisation has yet to dawn.

At the crisis summit in Washington, the Clinton administration suggested six

different "gestures" Netanyahu could make to restore faith in the peace process. The Israeli leader rejected them all, including closing the tunnel in Jerusalem or setting a date for the redeployment in Hebron, on the grounds that peace must be achieved "through negotiations and not through violence." Yet, on his return from Washington, Netanyahu took the unprecedented step of appearing on Israel's Arabic television channel to appeal directly to the Palestinians. "I ask you not to lose hope," he pleaded. "We were almost in the abyss..." but now "there is an opportunity for a fresh start for the peace process."

How to interpret such messages? Some Israeli analysts believe they are mere reflexes as Netanyahu and his government lurch from one crisis to another. Others — especially on the Palestinian side — say they are part of a conspiracy to increase the heat in the territories, thereby readying the Israeli army to reoccupy and thus bury Oslo once and for all.

But perhaps a more sober explanation lies less in the enigma of Netanyahu's policies than in the fragility of his ruling coalition. Should Netanyahu proceed with Oslo's interim agreement as written — as the Palestinians and the Arabs are demanding — he risks the defection of members from Likud as well as the hard-line national religious party, which has nine Knesset seats. Should he not proceed, the moderate wing of his coalition, such as Avigdor Kahalani's Third Way bloc and the religious Shas movement (who, together, have 13 seats), have already signalled they are ready to throw in their lot with the Labour opposition. Either way the coalition falls, opening the way to new Israeli elections or a national unity government.

There are many in Israel and the Occupied Territories who believe the latter option is perhaps now the only way to save the Oslo process. The wheels ahead will show whether Netanyahu is one of them.

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Channelling delegated powers

Awad El-Morr,

Chief Justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court, examines constitutional provisions limiting the exercise of delegated powers



Under Article 108 of the Constitution the president is entitled — in case of necessity and exceptional circumstances and upon delegation by a two-thirds majority of the members of the People's Assembly — to take decisions having the force of law. Delegated powers must be for a specified period, bearing on a defined subject matter, and articulating the basis on which its reglementation shall lean. These decisions have to be submitted to the Assembly on its first meeting following the expiry of the time limit prescribed for the use of delegated powers. Should they not be submitted, or fail to procure the approval of the Assembly after their submission thereto, they cease to have the force of law.

In case No. 25 for the eighth judicial year decided on 16 May 1992, the constitutional issue addressed to the Court for adjudication concerned the invalidity or otherwise of Decree-Law No. 102 (1980). The petitioners in this case, who after the termination of their service in the armed forces joined the Arab Authority for Manufacturing, claimed that, in addition to their earned salaries therefrom they remained entitled to their military pensions, acquired under Law No. 90 (1975). However, in 1980, Article 18 of Law No. 150 (1967) concerning the immunities and privileges of this authority was amended by Article 1 of the challenged presidential decree-law, which also subjected two employees of the authority and its productive units to Law No. 79 (1975) regarding social security, with the effect that military pensions which they used to receive in addition to their salaries were withheld.

The petitioners argued that Decree-Law No. 105 (1980) overstepped the limits of delegation accorded to the president under Law No. 29 (1972), on the grounds that whereas this law confined powers delegated to the president to the ratification of armament conventions and the issuance of decisions having the force of law in matters relating to arms expenditures and others necessary for the armed forces, the challenged decree-law was formulated to regulate requirements of social security for employees in the aforesaid authority in violation of articles 86 and 108 of the Constitution.

In striking down the contested decree-law, the Court pointed out that constitutional provisions represent the norms substantiating the regime of governance, levelling the apex of all mandatory rules. Delegated powers do not fall within the original mandate of the executive, but are derogative from its normal activities, in that only within their narrow restrained constitutional limits may such powers be exercised and construed.

In fact the framers exhaustively enumerated the exceptional jurisdictions of the executive along with their external boundaries in order to firmly rationalise their exercise and ordain their confinement to constitutional limitations.

Initially, legislation is the business of parliament under Article 86 of the Constitution. However, the principle of the separation of powers, which excludes overlapping jurisdictions and forbids intervention by a governmental branch into competencies allocated to another, was balanced by the need to confront threatening situations exacting the issuance of presidential decrees prescribing measures capable of meeting, promptly and accurately, the exigencies and repercussions of such situations.

With this in view, delegated powers were designed by the framers not as a parliamentary sweeping concession granting the president an absolute overall power, but as a narrowly limited faculty attached to necessities and associated with its compelling emanations. To this end, the Constitution ordered the parliament not to entirely renounce or substantially delegate the most important aspects of its legislative power. Motivated by the need to restrain the power to delegate, the Constitution set forth its requirements to which this Court extends its exclusive power of judicial review.

Under Article 108 of the Constitution, powers delegated to the executive, are firmly constrained: firstly, by the existence of circumstances of exceptional nature and where necessary in order not to use this power without reins adapting it to the need to face compelling situations; secondly, by requiring the approval of at least a two-thirds majority of the members of the parliament to ensure the existence of such pressing situations and other conditions to which delegation is attached; thirdly, by mandating a parliamentary determination as to the subject-matter of delegation and the basis on which their reglementation shall take place (the idea behind this, is to suppress tendencies of excessiveness if the executive was left uncontrolled to legislate); and fourth, by demanding an ascertained time limit defined either explicitly or implicitly and beyond which delegated powers will be withheld, in order not to admit their use in a manner invasive of the original competence of the parliament in adopting, amending or abrogating statutes in all domains.

Indeed, a fair exercise of delegated powers could not be achieved in the absence of viable controls thereon. This power of review — under the Constitution — has been conferred on parliament to verify the extent to which constitutional limitations on delegation had been observed.

In this regard, the framers concern was to obligate the president to submit to the parliament — and on its first session following the termination of the duration of delegated powers — the measures which he had taken in compliance therewith.

Failure to submit these measures thereto, or to have the approval of the parliament thereof, necessitates their detachment from the force of law which previously accompanied their issuance.

Within these lines, the exercise of delegated powers beyond their subject matter, violating the original competence of the parliament, dictates their annulment by this Court.

Indeed, the challenged Decree-Law No. 102 (1980) provided that Law No. 79 (1975) on social security shall apply to Egyptians employed either in the Arab Authority for Manufacturing, its productive units or corporations in which it participates. This authority was established among certain Arab countries — considered parties to its constituent instrument — with the intention to build up an industrial Arab base ensuring the progressive development of advanced industries and the common interests of these countries. Later on, participants in this authority, with the exception of Egypt, declared their withdrawal therefrom. As a consequence the challenged Decree-Law No. 30 (1979) was issued requiring on the one hand the retaining of its illegals, immunities and powers, along with the continuity of its activities and the bearing of its former liabilities, and on the other hand depriving the petitioners from their military pensions so long as they remain in the service of the authority.

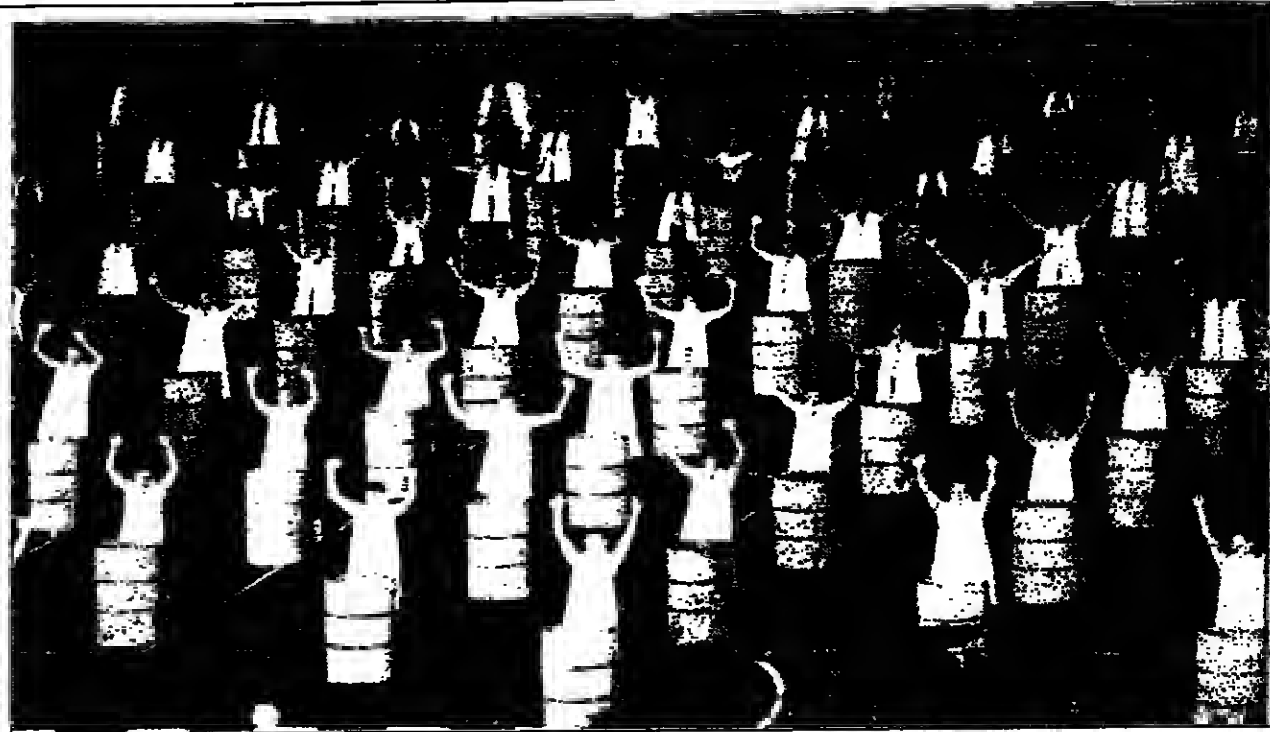
The government claimed that the challenged decree-law was issued under delegated powers mandated to the president by Law No. 29 (1972).

However, the Court noticed that this law dealt solely with the ratification of armament conventions along with military expenditures, requiring — as outlined by the explanatory note of that law — secrecy and promptness.

Taking into account that the subject-matter of the challenged decree-law was the annulment of the petitioners right to collaterally have their salaries earned from the Arab Manufacturing Authority and the pensions they acquired in return of their past services in the armed forces, the challenged decree-law deviates from constitutional requirements, violating Article 108.



VICTORY FESTIVITIES: Paratroopers, some of them carrying President Hosni Mubarak's picture, landed on the stage as part of a gala celebration on Monday night marking the 23rd anniversary of the October 1973 War. President Mubarak, Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, minister of defence, watched the song-and-dance festival organised by the ministries of defence and culture on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal opposite Ismailia



Private property defended

Under a controversial ruling by the Supreme Constitutional Court, the prosecutor-general should be stripped of his power to impound the assets of suspected financial offenders. Mona El-Nahhas reports

The Supreme Constitutional Court ruled on Saturday that an article in the Criminal Procedures Law that empowers the prosecutor-general to impound the assets of suspects accused of public money offences was unconstitutional. The court, under Chief Justice Awad El-Morr, declared that Article 208 ran counter to a constitutional text that prohibits the sequestration of private property without a court order.

The article in question states that the prosecutor has the authority to impound the assets of the accused if investigation produced enough evidence proving that the offender is guilty of embezzling state funds.

Constitutional Court sources told *Al-Ahram Weekly* the ruling was aimed at protecting private property and removing all "unconstitutional" barriers that might prevent its administration by the accused. Citing the legal principle that the accused is innocent until proven guilty, a source said: "It is illogical to deal with innocent people as if they were criminals, impounding their property before they are proven to be guilty."

Prosecutor Raga' El-Arabi declined to comment on the court ruling, declaring that it was still under study. But the ruling aroused controversy in legal circles, with some expressing worry about the consequences of its application and others disagreeing on whether it has a retroactive effect.

Court sources said the ruling was intended to be retroactive. "It should lead to the annulment of all orders issued by the prosecutor-general as long as the case continues to be heard by the courts," a source said.

Nabil Moshat Salem, head of Ain Shams University's Criminal Law Department, shared the same opinion. He argued that since the ruling is retroactive it should apply to El-Rayan and El-

Sherif, two defunct financial investment companies, whose assets were seized, and are being run, by the prosecutor-general. The sequestration of the two companies should be annulled, Salem said.

For her part, Fawzia Abdel-Sattar, a law professor at Cairo University, insisted that the ruling has no retroactive effect. According to Abdel-Sattar, the law establishing the Constitutional Court made it clear that its rulings take effect on the day following their publication in the official gazette. "This means that all orders the prosecutor may issue in the future are null and void but the orders he issued in the past, such as those related to the financial investment companies, cannot be touched," she said.

Abdel-Sattar also expressed fear that the ruling might have negative consequences. "Court orders usually take a very long time. The delay would provide the accused with the opportunity to smuggle their money abroad. By the time the court establishes that the suspect is guilty, the money would be gone," she said.

Abdel-Sattar explained that the "sole aim of the abolished article was to protect public money. The prosecutor's order was only provisional. If the suspect is found to be innocent, he will retain possession of his money. If he is proven to be guilty, the money will be restored to its original owners," she said.

Responding to this, a Constitutional Court source, who asked that his name be withheld, said a court order impounding the assets of a suspect should not take more than two weeks. "Any delay should not be used as a pretext for violating the Constitution," the source said.

Salem said any attempt to protect public money after it had been embezzled would be meaningless. "Safeguarding public money should be

done from the very beginning by tightening financial control, mainly by the Central Auditing Agency," he said.

Salem welcomed the court's ruling, declaring that it was in line with the Constitution that prohibits the sequestration of funds except by a court order.

Legal sources pointed out that the ruling would have no impact on sequestration orders issued by the Illicit Earnings Office, an affiliate of the Ministry of Justice, on the grounds that these orders cannot be issued without a court's consent. "Consequently, the office's order impounding the assets of industrialist Abdel-Wahhab El-Habbaq will not be affected by the ruling of the Constitutional Court," a source said.

Habbaq, former board chairman of the holding company for engineering industries, has been remanded in custody and his assets impounded for making illegal profits which, press reports said, amounted to millions of dollars. The reports alleged that Habbaq had restored to the state the amount of \$19 million but the remainder of his money was smuggled to banks in Switzerland.

The constitutionality of Article 208 was first contested in 1990 by Saad Mohamed Ahmed, a former minister of manpower, who was accused of financial malpractices by the Administrative Control Authority. The prosecutor-general had ordered his assets impounded in June 1988 but Ahmed filed a lawsuit with the Southern Cairo Court of First Instance, demanding the order be annulled.

As the case was being heard, Ahmed's lawyers contested the legality of Article 208. The court, believing they had a point, allowed the lawyers to take their complaint to the Supreme Constitutional Court.

Opposition discuss 'non-political' co-operation

Opposition Forces from across the political spectrum are exploring the prospects of limited co-operation in advance of next April's municipal elections. Amira Howeidly reports

Nasserists, Communists and Islamists are striving to reach an agreement on abstention from the use of political and ideological slogans in campaigning for next April's local council, or municipal, elections. A tripartite committee was set up for this purpose by Diaeddin Dawoud's Nasserist Party, the illegal Egyptian Communist Party and the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

The committee was described as an offshoot of the Political Parties and Groups Coordination Committee, established by the opposition in the wake of last year's parliamentary elections. The tripartite committee was limited to the three forces because other opposition groups — the Wafd, Labour, Tagammu and Liberals — had decided "not to impose ideological slogans on the people in the local council elections," said Naji El-Shehaby, Labour's election coordinator. It remains, he added, for the three members of the tripartite committee to reach a consensus on this point.

The birth of the tripartite committee took many analysts by surprise because it included two major arch-enemies — Communists and the Brotherhood — who appeared to be coordinating policies for the first time after bringing their war of words to an end.

Opposition forces have learned a lesson from their big failure in the last parliamentary elections, said Ibrahim El-Badravi, the Communist representative on the committee. "This lesson led to the birth of the tripartite committee."

El-Badravi explained that municipal elections are not politically-oriented because municipal councils are concerned with providing services to the people. "So our conflicts and differences with the Islamist trend should not be brought into the election battle as they would in parliamentary elections," he said.

At least 100,000 candidates are expected to

contest the elections, competing for around 40,000 seats on 1,571 local councils. The councils do not exercise any political authority.

"Despite coordination or even an alliance with the Islamists, I cannot run under their slogan that Islam is the solution," said El-Badravi. "This is why we formed the tripartite committee to sort out this problem. We can have a joint platform [for the municipal elections] that is not remotely related to politics or ideology."

In the 1995 parliamentary elections, the Wafd won six seats, the Tagammu five, Nasserists two, Liberals one and the outlawed Brotherhood one. The ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) won 318 seats.

According to Diaeddin Dawoud, the aim of the Political Parties and Groups Co-ordination Committee, the parent-body of the tripartite group, is to "stop the NDP from dominating the local councils as they did with the People's Assembly." Dawoud, however, is not oblivious of the radical differences between some of the larger committee's members, particularly between right and left.

Dawoud conceded that a "strong" group within his Nasserist Party opposed co-ordination with the Islamists. "But we are doing our best to eliminate these contradictions. They should rank second after the more important objective of setting up a strong opposition front," he said.

These contradictions should not figure in elections for the local councils which are concerned with services and social work, Dawoud said. And yet, he predicted a fierce battle "because the local councils provided valuable assistance to the NDP candidates who won in the parliamentary elections."

Hussein Abdel-Razek who represents the leftist Tagammu on the larger committee said: "I am against the Brotherhood's politics and ideol-

ogy, but they are a strong political force. The Islamist trend exists whether we like it or not. So we have to deal with them in order to come up with the best results."

But is the outlawed Brotherhood ready to renounce their slogan "Islam is the solution"? "There is a possibility that after the strong government clampdown on the group, the Brotherhood will become more flexible in accepting reality," said Abdel-Razek. "So they may give it up. And yet the risk may be too great if the slogan is their only means of political survival."

According to Abdel-Moneim Selim, the Brotherhood's representative on the larger committee, the leadership of the outlawed organisation has not taken a decision yet. The matter is under study, he said.

For Diaa Rashwan, a researcher at the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, Communist-Brotherhood co-ordination has become "de facto" partly because the Brotherhood has no other choice in view of the government clampdown. A more important reason, he said, is that opposition groups are incapable of contesting the municipal elections separately because each cannot field as many as 40,000 candidates.

If they run separately, the chances of success are "almost zero." But if they co-ordinate seriously, they may gain control of some councils, Rashwan said. And yet, he did not rule out the possibility that the attempt at coordination might collapse, even before the elections, due to the grave ideological and political differences and mistrust between the three groups in the quest for a united front.

Addressing the same symposium, Hamdi Zagzoug, Minister of *Al-Ahram* (religious endowments), urged the Arabs to take the initiative and prepare a plan for regaining Muslim and Christian rights. Accusing Israel of planning to rebuild King Solomon's Temple on the site of Al-Aqsa Mosque, Zagzoug warned the Arabs against "negligence and complacency."

Ahmed Sidki Al-Dajani, a former member of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's Executive Committee, condemned Israel's repression of the Palestinians and said that the Arabs should give worldwide publicity to the issue of Jerusalem. Like the religious leaders, Al-Dajani counselled Arab unity as the means of standing up to future "challenges."

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

Recipe for Jerusalem

THE HEADS of Al-Azhar Mosque and the Coptic Orthodox Church told a Press Syndicate symposium on Monday that defending holy sites in Jerusalem and supporting the Palestinians are a religious duty, reports Mona El-Nahhas. The symposium was part of a "cultural week" at the syndicate, marking the 23rd anniversary of the October 1973 War.

Al-Azhar's Sheikh Mohamed Sayed Tantawi called for using all legitimate means to regain occupied Arab lands. "Struggle and unity are the means of achieving this objective," he said. "It is our duty to lend a helping hand to our Palestinian brothers until they regain all their usurped rights."

According to Tantawi, Jerusalem was in Arab hands for 14 centuries, during which Muslims and Christians lived together like brothers. "We should not allow any aggression on any of the Islamic or Christian holy sites in Jerusalem," he said.

Pope Shenoudah said that force is the only means of confronting Israel, particularly in the quarrel over Jerusalem's holy sites. "Condemnation is not enough. We must resort to force, unity and a united Arab market, instead of the [proposed] Middle East market," he said.

Pope Shenoudah said his decision to prohibit Copts from making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem was aimed at thwarting "any type of normalisation" of relations with Israel. Normalisation, he said, cannot be made while the holy city is under occupation. Visiting Jerusalem now would be meaningless "and would only help Israel strengthen its economy and gain support," he said.

Referring to Israel's opening of a tunnel near the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Shenoudah said: "The Arabs must hasten to defend Muslim and Christian holy sites." Any Israeli claim to the city is unfounded because Jerusalem was in Jewish hands for

short periods of time only, he added.

Addressing the same symposium, Hamdi Zagzoug, Minister of *Al-Ahram* (religious endowments), urged the Arabs to take the initiative and prepare a plan for regaining Muslim and Christian rights. Accusing Israel of planning to rebuild King Solomon's Temple on the site of Al-Aqsa Mosque, Zagzoug warned the Arabs against "negligence and complacency."

Ahmed Sidki Al-Dajani, a former member of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's Executive Committee, condemned Israel's repression of the Palestinians and said that the Arabs should give worldwide publicity to the issue of Jerusalem. Like the religious leaders, Al-Dajani counselled Arab unity as the means of standing up to future "challenges."

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

Egypt and Israel unpackaged

Israeli tourism in Egypt has dropped dramatically, and so has package tourism involving the two countries. Rehab Saad investigates

Tourism officials and travel agents are reporting a drop in package tours combining Egypt and Israel as a result of the recent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli troops in the Occupied Territories. Most of the cancellations hit the so-called religious tourism market, namely that of tourists visiting the region to have a first-hand look at religious sites such as Old Cairo and Saint Catherine in Egypt and Jerusalem in Israel.

Although tourism to Egypt alone was said to have been unaffected, operators reported that the number of Israeli visitors to Egypt was declining. Tourism Minister Mamdouh El-Beltagi confirmed "limited cancellations by some of the groups coming from Israel." The Palestinian-Israeli clashes, he said, "will undoubtedly have a negative effect on tourism in Israel and may affect slightly all the countries of the region, including Egypt. But I stress that the drop will be in regional tourism only. The type of tourism that targets Egypt alone is not affected. On the contrary, it is expected to grow."

Sherif Farid of Wings Tours said that cancellations of the Egypt-Israel package amounted to 80 per cent. He also reported "a hundred per cent drop" in the number of Israelis coming to Egypt through his agency, "apparently because they are afraid of an anti-Israeli Egyptian reaction."

Before the eruption of the unrest in the Occupied Territories, Israelis were visiting Egypt in record numbers, ranking only second to Germans. The number of Israelis who visited Egypt between January and August 1996 amounted to 226,805 people, registering an increase of 31.5 per cent compared to the same period last year. And in August, 49,066 Israelis came to this country — an increase of 12.9 per cent over August 1995.

Abu Bakr El-Shorbagi of 3A Tours said cancellations for his company amounted to 25 per cent. "A lot of trips which were scheduled to Egypt and Israel this month were either postponed or cancelled," he said. El-Shorbagi explained that much of his work involves tourists from Latin America and Asia. "These countries are far and their flight tickets are expensive. Therefore, their tourists like to make combined tours including Egypt, Israel, Turkey and Greece. Some of them dropped Israel from their programme and kept the other countries while the rest preferred to cancel the trip altogether," he said.

Elhami El-Zayyat of Emeco Tours said that the cancellation of package tours, which should have been expected, was the result of a drastic drop in tourism to Israel. "I know that many travel agents in Israel are suffering because reservations from overseas are not forthcoming," he said.

Ezzaddin El-Shabrawi of Egyptian-American Tours believes that the Palestinian-Israeli clashes will affect tourism to Egypt, particularly tourism from the American market. "Many Americans have a fuzzy knowledge of geography and anything that happens anywhere in the Middle East will stop them from coming," he said.

El-Zayyat found comfort in the European market. "If tourists know geography well and if their media coverage is impartial, they are not going to stay away. France, Britain and Italy are sympathetic to the Palestinians and they admire Egypt's position," El-Zayyat said.

For Minister El-Beltagi "peace and tourism are interrelated. Tourism cannot flourish unless there is a peaceful and stable atmosphere," he said.

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Epic memories

The objective of the October War was to achieve a new strategic situation in the region that would compel the US and Israel to move toward a just political settlement, writes Air Vice-Marshal Gabr Ali Gabr

This month of every year brings with it memories of the epic of the October War, the greatest Egyptian military achievement of this century. It is a good occasion to answer one of the important questions it has raised: Why was this epic engagement more a war of political galvanisation than a war of territorial liberation?

In order to answer this question, we must focus our sights on the decision to wage this war and the political and military conditions in which it was taken. The decision to wage war is the most complex and gravest decision a political leadership may have to take. War is never an aim per se, but one of the political means and instruments for achieving national objectives.

Any political leadership that opts for war must have the capacity to control its course after it breaks out and it must know when and how to stop the fighting. War is not a one-sided activity. It is a conflict between rival powers and wills fought with steel and fire. It is also a decision that must be taken in the context of surrounding circumstances and the possibilities and available options these circumstances present.

When President Sadat embarked on this decision-making process, all efforts and initiatives to effect a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli struggle — UN Security Council Resolution 242, the bilateral and quadri-lateral talks, the Rogers' initiative, Ambassador Jarring's initiative and even Sadat's initiative in 1971 — had all ended in failure.

At the same time, Egyptian-Soviet relations were very shaky. The Soviets were suspicious of Sadat's political orientations after he assumed power and there were fundamental differences between the two leaderships over the military option which, since 1972, Sadat increasingly began to see as inevitable in light of the persistent Israeli intransigence which had brought all peace efforts to a dead end. The Soviets, however, feared that any military engagement would lead to a confrontation with the US. The tensions that these differences provoked were augmented by the Soviet Union's refusal to supply Egypt with the necessary armaments to launch a military offensive, such as long-range fighter planes and guided anti-aircraft missiles. In order to discourage Egypt from seeking a military solution, it also delayed the delivery of military components which had already been contracted for under President Nasser and in the early years of Sadat's presidency.

Following the Soviet-American summit meeting of May 1972, President Sadat felt that the two super-powers had reached an agreement to freeze the situation in the Middle East for fear that any escalation would lead to a conflict in their interests and jeopardise the policy of rapprochement they had inaugurated. This, he realised, explained the Soviet reluctance to supply Egypt with offensive weaponry and its sluggishness in arms deliveries. As a result, Sadat decided to cancel the mission of the Soviet military advisers and technical units that President Nasser had asked for in 1970, in order to support Egypt's air defence capabilities and to provide Egypt with the strategic air reconnaissance and tracking systems it lacked.

However, Egypt's efforts to contain the dispute between the two countries and the Soviet Union's desire to retain access to the Egyptian port facilities for its fleet permitted the continuation of a cautious co-operation between the two countries. The Soviets supplied the Egyptians with some of the necessary weaponry, but it was barely "a pip supporting the water

jug" as the popular Egyptian saying has it.

By March 1973, the Soviets knew that President Sadat had made up his mind to go to war. They advised him to reassess the level of the training of his armed forces and to ensure the highest calibre of leadership on all fronts. They also expressed their fears that Israel would launch a pre-emptive strike that would shatter the Egyptian forces. From this advice and previous contacts with the Soviet leadership, Sadat understood that, although the Soviets were opposed to an all-out war, they would not object to limited military operations in order to spur political activity on the Middle East issue. In a meeting between Hafez Ismail, Sadat's national security adviser, and Soviet officials in June 1973, Brezhnev told him that the Egyptian leadership had a right to make its own decisions but that he hoped this would not precipitate a sea of blood.

On the other side of the globe, the US was adamant about maintaining Israel's military superiority over all the Arab front-line nations combined, ostensibly to preserve the balance of power in the region. As the Nixon administration was also approaching an election year, they had no desire to alienate the powerful Jewish lobby. Quite the contrary. At the end of 1971, Nixon announced that the US would resume supplying Israel with military aircraft and in February 1972, the US concluded an arms deal with Israel that included 42 new Phantoms and 82 Sky Hawks. As a result, the military balance of power was tipped heavily in Israel's favour, particularly with regard to its air force capability which had always been its key to victory in previous conflicts.

To make matters worse, the American administration pledged to Israel in writing that it would not pursue any new peace initiative without having first discussed it with the Israelis. That America's Middle East policy was tied firmly to the Israeli position was amply demonstrated throughout 1972 (the year of the presidential elections) when both sides' official statements on the issue were virtually identical. This one-sided stance was responsible for the failure of the talks between Henry Kissinger, Nixon's national security adviser, and his Egyptian counterpart, Hafez Ismail, whom Sadat had asked to convene the talks in February 1973 in a last-ditch attempt to seek an opening that might lead to a just political solution to the issue.

To a great extent, the Nixon administration's policies on this issue were heavily influenced by powerful forces in American politics. While Israel and its supporters in the American decision-making centres were able to press the White House in its favour, the Arabs had neither the means nor the channels to counter these pressures. At the same time, the Arabs were unable to rally their available forces in order to effect a substantial enough change in the balance of regional power that might compel the American administration to modify its position. Consequently, instead of attempting to pressure Israel into accepting a just solution, the American administration simply sought further concessions from the Arabs.

It was thus that Kissinger told Ismail on 25 February 1973, "You expect us — if we can — to seek a specific solution the result of which would be to bring about an essential change in Israel's fixed positions... Can we bring about such a change? I will tell you that persuasiveness, and even our desire to stand firmly behind that solution, depends on how much we can point to tangible changes in the Arab or Egyptian attitudes... That is the key."

President Sadat, however, had a different opinion. With his initiative in 1971, he had come to the end of the line in making concessions. He reasoned that if the Arabs had to change their attitudes in order to get the US to take action toward a political solution, this could only come about through a shift in the balance of power between the Arabs and Israel, not through further Arab concessions.

As Egypt's efforts failed to revive the Eastern front and to secure tangible progress in international peace diplomacy, the populace within Egypt and other Arab countries was clamouring for war in order to end the state of no-war-no-peace that had prevailed after the war of attrition. The pressures forced the Arab political leaderships to move further toward a war footing, which in turn supported Egypt's efforts to mobilise all available Arab military capacities in order to render the option of war with Israel feasible.

Against this background, the Arab League Council, in its session of September 1972, moved to review the political situation from every aspect in light of which they would draw up a plan for joint action. The plan would delineate the tasks and obligations for which the member nations would be responsible in order to end the state of no-war-no-peace which had become highly detrimental to Arab interests and legitimate rights.

The second opinion, advocated by General Saad El-Shazli and supported by Sadat, was that Egypt's armed forces, with the weapons that were scheduled to be delivered in accordance with agreements already concluded, would be sufficiently equipped to permit a limited offensive operation, even given Israel's air superiority. The strategy would rely on intensive anti-aircraft missile bombardment in conjunction with concentrated air cover by Egyptian fighter planes in order to protect the ground forces in their offense. Head-on collision battles would be fought afterwards to exhaust the enemy's armour and air force.

The latter view was to prevail. Sadat dismissed Mohamed Sadeq and replaced him by Lieutenant General Ahmed Ismail whose views coincided with those of Sadat and El-Shazli. The political and military leaderships were thus united on pursuing the optimum military option available at that time. This was to wage a limited offensive in order to break the state of no-war-no-peace that was so potentially detrimental to Egypt's political and economic well-being. The armed forces had reached a combat capacity that would enable them to undertake such an operation.

Planning now could move into gear. In November 1972, Ahmed Ismail met to discuss the potential scenarios with the Syrian political and military leadership, and over the following months they met again frequently to co-ordinate operations so that fighting could take place on both fronts simultaneously. At the same time, they agreed that it would be necessary to rally other Arab forces, notably the oil weapon, in order to meet their objectives.

The Egyptian and Syrian leaderships defined the war's political objective as "to challenge the concept of Israeli security by a military action, in accordance with the capacities of the spheres. However, in spite of the advantages it had gained in terms of the numerical superiority of its land forces to the troops Israel had to deploy on two fronts, it was still insufficient for deep offensive operations.

By the time of the October War, Egypt's efforts had met with varying degrees of success in all three

armed forces, the aim of which is to inflict the greatest possible losses upon the enemy and to convince him that his continued occupation of our territory saddles him with greater costs than he can afford and that his concept of security which is based upon military and political intimidation is not an iron shield that can protect him now or in the future."

Within the framework of this strategy, Sadat outlined three military objectives for the Egyptian armed forces; to end the state of military stagnation by breaking the cease-fire on 6 October 1973; to inflict the greatest losses possible on the enemy in terms of personnel, weaponry and equipment and to liberate the occupied territories in successive stages in accordance with the potential for this made possible by ensuing developments.

The clarity of the strategic objectives, which were based upon the actual capacities of the armed forces at the time, constituted a major factor in the success of the October War. This factor was desperately lacking in the 1967 War. The political-military leadership then were fully aware that Egypt's armed forces lacked the material necessary to liberate the occupied territory in a full-scale war. The precision of the political and military objectives, the lengthy and detailed planning and co-ordination, and the staging of the re-acquisition of occupied territory according to available potential are a reflection of the leadership's cool-headed realism.

Indeed, if it took more than two years, after rebuilding the defensive capacities of Egypt's armed forces, to develop its offensive capacities to the degree it had reached by the time of the outbreak of the war, it would have been folly to think that it could have achieved such the ambitious task of regaining all the occupied territories within a matter of days. The Egyptian military and political leadership was fully aware of this. That is why it set as the task of the October War to utilise the available Egyptian and Syrian forces in a jointly co-ordinated action, in conjunction with the oil weapon, in order to achieve a new strategic situation in the region that would exert the necessary pressure on the US and Israel and compel them to move toward a just political settlement.

This is, indeed, what transpired on the Egyptian front. Why it has not yet transpired on the Syrian and Palestinian fronts is another story.



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Men-only poll

WHILE Kuwaiti men went to the ballot boxes last Monday to elect a new parliament, women staged protests against their exclusion from the only elections held in any of the Arab Gulf States.

Kuwait's parliament stages some lively debates, but has limited powers and cannot overrule the country's emir, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah. The parliament has been disbanded twice since its inception—first in 1976 and again in 1986 following severe parliamentary criticism of cabinet ministers. While Kuwait prides itself on having an elected legislature, it is often described as being ruled by a "chosen few" because of the restrictions placed on voting. Naturalised Kuwaitis, members of the armed forces and women are not allowed to vote, thereby allowing only 107,000 out of Kuwait's 700,000 citizens to exercise this right.

Of the 50 outgoing parliamentary members, 41 ran for re-election and 25 retained their positions.

The highest winner is the government, "headed by the two official newspapers in Kuwait last Tuesday. Islamists, however, grabbed 16 seats, up from 15, which left liberals with only four seats, compared to the nine they held in the last assembly.

Before the election, the outgoing parliament was criticised for not addressing Kuwait's major issues, primarily the economy, which is still struggling from the effects of the Gulf War, and further threats by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, whose occupation forces were ousted in 1991 by the allied forces.

Most Kuwaitis, while pleased with new penalties for theft of public money, believe the old parliament wasted too much of its four-year term on trivial issues, such as Islamic dress and banning co-education at Kuwait University. With complaints about the old parliament lingering in the air, expectations for the new chamber are on the rise.



Phantom coercion

Abdullah Gul, Turkish Premier Erbakan's right-hand man, and state minister for foreign affairs, spoke to Omayma Abdel-Latif last week about the compromises one has to make as a coalition partner

Abdullah Gul is known as one of the two pillars of Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party (Rafah). The other is 63-year-old Justice Minister Shawkat Kazim, a long-time colleague of the premier. Gul accompanied Erbakan on his visit to Cairo last week.

With a doctorate in economics, 46-year-old Gul is a professor at Istanbul University and, like most key figures in Rafah, has mastered Arabic and English. He plays a major role in shaping Erbakan's foreign policy and is known to be the architect of the "friendly and warm relations" between Rafah and Washington. According to the American ambassador in Ankara, Mark Grossman, Gul has played a significant role in getting the American administration to accept Rafah, the first Islamic party to have a share of power in Turkey.

Gul does not hide his firm belief in the Western style of democracy. He was once quoted as saying, "Turkey has a democratic system which is far more progressive than that applied in neighbouring Islamic countries. We want a society and a democracy in the Western sense of the word." Gul is known for his moderate views on political issues. He admits that Rafah will not be able to implement its Islamic vision because it is a partner in a government that keeps to a secular line.

According to one Turkish diplomat, Gul is effectively Erbakan's foreign minister. "When Erbakan formed his cabinet, Gul was made responsible for Central Asian affairs. He formulates most of Erbakan's foreign policy moves, and he was the one who proposed Erbakan's North Africa visit to improve relations with the Arab world. He acts as if he were the foreign minister," said the diplomat. Gul spoke to Al-Ahram Weekly in English.

Rafah has been sharing power with Tansu Ciller's True Path Party for two months now. During this time, Rafah party leaders have been accused of neglecting their electoral promises for the sake of gaining

power. What is your reaction?

First of all, we have a coalition government, which means that we do not have the right to impose our electoral programme. Turkey's voters chose to give us half the votes, so we have to compromise on everything because the government is not led by Rafah alone. We will, therefore, have to wait some time before implementing some of our programmes and principles. That does not mean, however, that we ignore them completely. We strongly believe in each and every one of our principles. I believe that we are doing something good for the whole Islamic world.

So how would you account for the defence agreement that was signed with Tel Aviv despite Erbakan's fiery election-time statements that he would not co-operate with Israel? The agreement was signed before our government came to power and, as we said before, it merely involves technical co-operation in the field of defence. Before we came to power, we had our own suspicions about the agreement, but once we had access to the documents, we realised that it was the same agreement that had been signed with 17 other countries, including Egypt. The Rafah-True Path coalition signed something which cannot be called an agreement, because the Americans forced us to deal with Israel.

The story begins when we asked the United States to provide us with the necessary know-how and technology to upgrade some 60 Phantom aircraft belonging to the Turkish armed forces. The only response we received was a flat "No". However, we were told that we could easily gain access to this technology, but only through Israel—the one and only country, other than the US, that possesses such technology. We had two options: either we forgot all about the 60 Phantom aircraft which cost an estimated \$600 million or we dealt with Israel. We decided on the second option. Unfortunately, the Israelis used this claim that Turkey was associating with them and spread such propaganda

around the region. [Their claims] are not true. Besides, we have a condition in the agreement which says we are free to share this know-how with any other country.

Recent reports have spoken of contacts made between Erbakan and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Are these reports true?

These reports are groundless. Erbakan did not call Saddam, but there is constant high-level contact between [Iraq and Turkey].

Iraqi Foreign Minister Said Al-Sabaf described the "security zone" which Turkey intends to establish on Iraqi soil as an occupation of Iraq which will lead to grave consequences. How do you comment? I believe we have explained this. What we wanted to do in northern Iraq was protect Turkey's borders. We respect Iraq's [territorial] integrity and we would never think of occupying any part of Iraqi land. But in northern Iraq there is an authority gap, and the PKK [Kurdistan Workers Party] has bases there from which they infiltrate Turkey and kill innocent people. The PKK does not represent the Kurdish people. It is a Marxist-Leninist organisation, and they are not only killing Turks but targeting Kurdish people as well. They feel free in that area and we are telling the Iraqis: either you control the area or it is our right to take all kinds of measures.

But how can the Iraqis control it when Saddam is not allowed into the area?

In this case, there are some [local] leaders like [Kurdish Democratic Party head] Massoud Barzani in the area through whom the Iraqis can govern the region. But if Iraq cannot control its land and if Barzani and other forces cannot gain full control of the area, then we will take all the necessary measures to control it.

Do Iraqi officials still call the "security zone" an occupation? They know quite well we do not have such an in-

tervention. We understand each other and they know exactly what we are going to do and they know our intentions. There is no need to worry; we are asking them to co-operate to settle the situation in northern Iraq.

From time to time, the Iraqis need to make such statements.

Being an Islamic party, how much contact do you have with other Islamic movements in the Arab world?

We have had contacts with some Islamic movements. They have attended party meetings and ceremonies and we have also encountered them at international conferences organised by Islamic institutes and centres worldwide. But our relations were confined to movements which were not involved in any terrorist or violent activities. All we wanted to do was to strengthen our relations with Islamic countries.

After we came to power, we wanted to have strong relations with Arab governments, so we have not dealt with any Islamic movement which might be regarded as an opposition force. It has never been our intention to interfere in any country's internal affairs.

There were reports that Erbakan was mediating between the Egyptian government and the banned Muslim Brotherhood on his visit to Cairo. Is this true?

Premier Erbakan was on an official visit and we did not have any contact with the Brotherhood. But if we were asked to do that and we could contribute to the peace and harmony of Islamic countries, then why not? Until now, however, we have not had any meetings with any member of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Do you expect Erbakan's Libya visit to affect American-Turkish relations adversely?

I do not think it will. Turkey, like other European countries, has good relations with Libya and I do not believe that our relations with the US will be adversely affected by this visit.

Erbakan's Libyan dilemma

Turkish Premier Erbakan's visit to Libya has backfired, angering his country more than he anticipated, reports Doaa El-Bey

By visiting Libya amid widespread opposition, Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan has dragged his government to its lowest ebb. His actions during his first three months in power have dismayed not only both his secularist opposition and Islamist supporters, but also Turkey's closest ally, the United States.

The secularist opposition has showered Erbakan with criticism because he has adopted policies that deviate from Turkey's traditional pro-Western line. The premier's detractors have also accused him of being too keen to talk to pariah nations.

The left-wing opposition People's Republican Party, which has 49 seats in the 550-seat parliament, filed a motion on Monday night for a vote of confidence in the government, after Erbakan was publicly humiliated by Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. The day after, the Democratic Left Party, which holds 73 parliamentary seats, seconded the confidence vote bid.

The text of the motion denounces Erbakan's tour for being "marked by diplomatic scandals," adding that Turkey has never been placed in such a degrading situation. The parliament is due to debate the motion within the next two weeks.

Erbakan's tour lasted one week and took the prime minister to Egypt, Libya and Nigeria. He returned to Ankara on Tuesday. Although Erbakan's coalition government has five deputies more than the absolute majority of 276 he needs in parliament to win the confidence vote, many deputies from the True Path Party (DYP)—the coalition partner of Erbakan's Welfare Party (Rafah)—are not happy with his foreign policy.

Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller, the leader of the DYP, said Turkey could now see who its enemies and who its friends were. In a joint press conference on the last day of Erbakan's visit, Gaddafi expressed his displeasure at Turkey's relations with Israel, criticising Ankara for signing a military pact with Tel Aviv. The Libyan leader also called for the establishment of a Kurdish homeland. Erbakan had said before the conference that there was no Kurdish problem in Turkey, but only a terrorist group working against the regime. Turkey has been battling separatist Kurds for 12 years.

Ciller described Gaddafi's declarations as "enough to set Turkey against him," and vowed that Turkey would keep on fighting the rebel secessionist Kurdish Workers Party. In a sign of diplomatic protest, her Foreign Ministry temporarily recalled Turkey's ambassador to Libya, Ates Balkan, on Monday.

Softening the blow at the end of the press conference, Gaddafi praised Erbakan's Rafah, de-

scribing it as the only party in modern Turkey capable of joining the country's past with its present.

The opposition Motherland Party blamed Gaddafi's statements on Erbakan. "If a terrorist dictator is trying to give advice to the Turkish state, the reason is Erbakan's lack of substance," said party leader Mesut Yilmaz.

The reaction of the US to Erbakan's visit was even stronger than that of the Turkish opposition. America was especially angered when the Turkish premier described the West's accusations that Libya supports terrorism as "biased allegations" and said he would defy US pressure and forge closer ties with Tripoli. He also said his country wanted to step up cooperation with Libya in the fight against terrorism "of which it is also a victim"—an apparent reference to the US raid on Libya in 1986. Erbakan expressed his view that the "unjust embargo" imposed on Libya would be lifted soon.

After returning from his trip, Erbakan played down a call from Gaddafi for the foundation of a Kurdish state. "Gaddafi is known for making philosophical speeches like that," he said.

The US described as "highly troubling" Erbakan's defence of Gaddafi's regime. "It would be highly surprising indeed of the prime minister of an allied country, a NATO country, to defend a terrorist like Gaddafi," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said. The department declared, however, that it was still waiting for a full text of Erbakan's statement before taking any action.

The US State Department also warned Ankara against developing trade ties with Tripoli. Nevertheless, a series of accords to boost commercial links and to settle Libya's debts to Turkey were signed during Erbakan's visit. Libyan officials said that the two countries plan to boost annual bilateral trade from \$700 million to \$2 billion.

Erbakan's overtures to Muslim states have not won him the full support of Islamists in his party. They feel he has reneged on the promises he made during the election campaign to cut ties with Israel and pull Turkey out of NATO. Since coming to power, the Turkish prime minister has signed a military pact with Israel and is highly unlikely to withdraw his country from NATO now that his government is expected to face a confidence vote.

The question that remains is why Erbakan should have insisted on visiting Libya at a time when the move was widely opposed inside Turkey and when Tripoli had recently directed criticism against Ankara. Not long before the Turkish premier's visit, Gaddafi was quoted as describing the Turks as the butchers of the Kurds and saying that they had once slaughtered Arabs as well.

Who wants a Kurdish state?

Anwar Gurgeis, 64, is an Iraqi Kurd who has been working with the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) for the past 50 years and does not want a Kurdish state.

"We have been in this agony for 50 years; if we are not attacked by others, we fight one another. There could never be a Kurdish state because we do not want Iraq to be south and north of us, as proposed by the Americans. We want to be under a united Iraq, but without Saddam," said Gurgeis as he stood at the Ibrahim Al-Khalil gate on the Turkish-Iraqi border under a huge portrait of Massoud Barzani, leader of the KDP.

In fact most people in Zakho call him President Barzani. His pictures hang on the walls of the Yarmouk (organisation) KDP offices where there is hardly a sign in Arabic. The graffiti on the walls of Barzan playground on Zakho's main thoroughfare reads: "The people of Kurdistan believe that al-Rafik (comrade) Barzani's proposal to call elections reflects the desires of the Kurdish people." And there was yet another life-size portrait of Barzani as if to confirm that he now has full control of Iraqi Kurdistan. Though some Western observers believe that these are signs of a state in the making, many Kurds who spoke to Al-Ahram Weekly share Gurgeis' view, emphasising that northern Iraqi Kurds are definitely not vying for a state.

"We never say we are independent from Iraq; we are still part of Iraq and so will remain. We are Iraqi citizens," explained Rasmy Gaber, another Iraqi Kurd.

The Iraqi government, for its part, does not seem to have given up its bid to retake the rebellious Kurdish north. Speaking before a congress of 300 Iraqi immigrants which was held earlier this week

Iraq's armoured thrust to retake its rebellious Kurdish north has again raised the prospect of a re-alignment of power in a region that has seen several in the last decade. Omayma Abdel-Latif reports from Iraqi Kurdistan

in Baghdad, Iraq's deputy prime minister Tarek Aziz warned that Iraq's Kurdish north will suffer more bloodshed unless President Saddam Hussein's government restores its control on the region.

"Without Iraq, without the Iraqi state and without the Iraqi leadership, the north's fate is chaos, bloodshed, destruction and submission to foreigners and their manipulation," said Aziz.

It is tempting for outsiders to see the 25 million Kurds, the largest so-called "nation" on earth without a state, as victims of the states on whose territory they live: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

There are, however, complications. Kurds have traditionally lived in feuding tribal societies. They are still so deeply divided that governments can easily pit one group against another. At least two distinct languages, and many more dialects, keep them apart. What they have in common is that they look different from their Turkish, Arab and Persian neighbours, both in physiognomy and their distinctive, often colourful, dress. Experts disagree on whether there is a common culture. A senior Turkish diplomat is worried that, far from signalling the end of the three-decade-old rivalry between Kurdish leaders Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, Saddam's helping hand to Barzani's KDP could create even greater instability in the region.

Turkish officials fear that a Kurdish state in northern Iraq might further inflame the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The PKK, 12 years into its war against Turkey, uses northern Iraq as its major base for cross-border logistics, training and operations to

further escalate violence. They have come up with a proposal to establish a local administration that would bring together the Turkmen and the Kurds to "protect each other and to fill the vacuum of authority in northern Iraq," according to Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller. Along the same line, Turkish media spoke of a form of "federalism" as the only way to hold together disparate ethnic minorities in the region and to prevent a Kurdish state from forming on the Turkey-Iraq border.

"Federalism, or else another Saddam... is the only way to keep multi-religious, multi-ethnic societies together," said one Turkish commentator.

Baghdad, however, fiercely condemned appeals by Turkey urging respect for the rights of the Turkmen in Iraq. Iraqi Culture and Information Minister Abdel-Ghani Abdel-Ghaffar described the Turkish appeal as an attempt to justify the American military presence in Turkey.

"All Iraqis enjoy the same rights, regardless of their ethnic, religious or denominational origin. They reject all foreign protection, whether it comes from Turkey or the United States," said the Iraqi minister this week.

Sefeen Dazy, deputy head of the KDP, on the other hand, said the organisation is seriously considering the proposal to establish a local administration in northern Iraq. The local administration, according to Dazy, will include Turkmen, who number approximately 400,000 in northern Iraq, and other ethnic groups in the region. "The end of fighting in Kurdistan will herald a new beginning in the history

of the region. The situation is quiet since Barzani took over, but everybody awaits the next step," Dazy said.

The next step, announced Barzani in a conference held earlier this week in Salahadin resort, is that the KDP will hold elections to choose a new government which will represent all ethnic groups in northern Iraq.

An official of the KDP told the Weekly that Barzani was even conducting negotiations with his rival, Jalal Talabani, to participate in the elections.

"Barzani asked them to lay down their arms and begin peaceful negotiations, but so far there has been no word on the results of the negotiations," said Fa'ek Nori, deputy head of the KDP office in Ankara.

He added that the Kurdish parliamentary elections were not yet scheduled. The Kurds, he explained, were conducting negotiations with all parties concerned in northern Iraq, including the Turkmen and Assyrians.

"All political forces in the region will be properly represented in the impending Kurdish parliament, and they will all be part of the political and democratic process in Kurdistan," Nouri told the Weekly.

For many Turkmen, however, the proposal seems far-fetched since most of their population, estimated by Ismat Cojaci, head of the Turkmen Front in Ankara, at 3 million, live south of the 36th parallel under Saddam's rule.

"The Turkmen have always acted as a balance in

this region. Cooperation with the Kurds is unlikely because if the 500,000 Turkmen in northern Iraq become part of a local government, the rest of the Turkmen population will be in Saddam's firing pan. Also, it runs counter to Iraq's long-standing policy of not allowing Turkmen to get involved in politics," said Cojaci. Any administration in northern Iraq should be approved by the Iraqi government in Baghdad.

Mustapha Kamal, head of the Turkmen National Party, the only official Turkmen party in northern Iraq, said that prior to any arrangements with the Kurds in northern Iraq, Turkmen-dominated areas from Dala to Tel Afar and Kirkouk should be under "Operation Provide Comfort" protection.

"Barzani offered us a partnership in the parliament and the new local administration, but it is difficult to agree to that with only 300,000 to 400,000 Turkmen in the north. That can mean only one thing—we will be the weaker partner," Kamal said.

He disclosed that Barzani met secretly with leaders of the Turkmen and Assyrians in Arbil where he made the offer to participate in the government to be formed after the elections.

"We had some preconditions. We asked them to change the name of the area from Kurdistan to something which has a more limited connotation. Calling it Kurdistan means that this part of Iraq could become separate, and we are completely against that," explained Kamal.

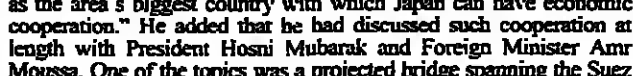
"The second condition was that this area should not be totally isolated from Iraq. We do not want Iraq to be divided into 'federalism'. We reiterated our plan that this area remain part of Iraq and that any arrangements being made currently are only temporary. Everything will return to normal once Saddam is out of power," Kamal told the Weekly.

هكذا من الأصل

Japan, unhappy with the Netanyahu government's stance on the peace process, is striving for a more prominent role in the Middle East, the Japanese foreign minister spoke to **Mansour Abul-Azm** in an interview in Tokyo

During his visit to the Middle East last summer, Ikeda said Arab leaders spoke to him about their strong desire to end the stagnation in the peace talks. "and I conveyed this desire to the Israeli government

Ikedo is a seasoned Japanese politician and a leading Liberal Democratic Party, the country's largest political party. He is one of the few Japanese leaders who take a keen interest in the U.S. market.



guarantee Iraq's implementation of all Security Council resolutions, Ikeda said. He referred to the resolutions intended to punish Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. These included a ban on weapons of mass destruction and economic sanctions.

Slick Willy wiles his way through the first presidential debate and comes one step closer to re-election. And Dole — well, Dole is Dole, writes **Tarek El-Tablawy**

What then are Clinton's issues and his agenda for a second term? The long and the short of it is this: anything you want it to be until he gets elected. However, standing in his way is Bob Dole, still debating, still fumbling, and still trying to muster some enthusiasm for a 15 per cent across-the-board tax cut.

In an exclusive interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga faced the fusillade of questions posed by **Gamal Nkrumah**

day I can complete my doctoral thesis." Kumaratunga mused.

"Our relations with Middle Eastern countries are strong. [Reported incidents of Sri Lankan nationals disappearing or being badly treated] have not soured relations between Sri Lanka and the Arab world because we know that it is not the Arab governments who are committing these gross violations of human rights. It is the employ-

(In Arabic and English)

- Mohamed Abdel-Salam
Dr. Mo'nan Gafar
Dr. Olifat H. Agwa
Dr. Saad El Ibrahim
Dr. Mohamed El Sayed Solim
Dr. Zakaria Hussein
Dr. Abdel Monem Seid
Ahmed Ibrahim Mahmoud
Dr. Milad Hanna
Ahmed Ibrahim Mahmoud
Dr. Ahmed Fakhr
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Dr. Hussein Abdelah
Dr. Kamal Shaid
Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim Al-Dessouki

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Ibrahim Nafie



Trust in long-term T-Bonds

As the government turns to long-term T-bonds, most experts believe they are a more viable means of financing the deficit than short-term bills, writes Niveen Wahish

Subscriptions for the batch of long term treasury bonds (T-bonds) issued by the government, worth a total of LE4 billion, closed on 30 September almost as quickly as they opened, with investors rushing to put in their orders. The bonds, known as Treasury Bonds 2003, so named after their maturity date, have an 11 per cent per annum yield, divided into two payments per year. The bonds will be registered on the stock market three months after the closure of subscription.

This issue of the 2003 T-bonds marks the second such offering by the government in two years. The first was an LE3 billion long-term bond offer which carried a 12 per cent per year interest rate.

Prior to the introduction of these bonds in 1991, the government first issued three-month, six-month and one-year treasury bills, which it used as an investment tool for financing the state budget deficit. It subsequently modified this practice, turning to long-term bonds as a more suitable financial instrument.

Moustafiz El-Said, head of the State Budget Department at the Ministry of Finance, said that the success of the first long-term bond issue encouraged the government to place more treasury

bonds for public subscription. This move, he explained, was a marked departure from the government's pre-1990 practice of printing money in order to finance the budget deficit.

As the economic reform programme got under way in 1991, the government decided to finance its deficit through real savings, and so issued treasury bills. The short-term bills, however, proved to be useful only as a temporary means of covering the debt. As a result, the long-term bonds were introduced.

"Not only are the long-term bonds needed to finance long-term investments and development projects, they also help in regulating the market," said El-Said.

By attracting the public to these T-bonds, he said, the government is able to absorb excess liquidity in the market and, therefore, curb inflation. In addition, the bonds will serve as a long-term interest rate indicator.

To encourage demand for the T-bonds, the government has made them exempt of any taxes and allows that they be circulated on the stock market. It also offers them a high annual interest rate which surpasses that on bank deposits.

Interest rates on short term banking deposits in Egyptian pounds



The demand on the last T-bond issue, he stated, was satisfactory. "The public trusts the treasury bonds because they are issued by the government," noted El-Said. "However, corporate bonds are less stable because the companies may go bankrupt."

And, as an added benefit, offering these bonds has no adverse effects on the privatisation programme. "The bonds will not lure investors away from the shares of privatised companies because each has its own advantages," he explained. Corporate shares may yield quicker or greater profits, but T-bonds are more secure and are not dependent on the success or failure of a company.

Ashraf Shamseddin, deputy chairman of the Capital Market Authority, also asserts that trading these bonds on the stock exchange will not reduce demand for corporate shares.

"On the contrary, these bonds will help further stimulate the market because they will increase the variety of securities being traded," he said. Investors like to diversify their portfolios in order to realise the greatest profit possible. Shamseddin stated, "Rarely does any astute investor place all his eggs in one basket."

Hamdi Abdel-Azim, professor of economics and dean of the Tanta branch of the Sadat Academy for Administrative Sciences, however, is not quite so optimistic. He said that although the T-bonds are a good means of financing the deficit and are less of a burden than the short-term bills, they will, nonetheless, result in the further accumulation of domestic debt. Moreover, said Abdel-Azim, the money would be better invested in setting up profit-oriented, labour intensive production projects.

"The money from these bonds is used in infrastructural investments which require substantial capital, yet do not result in any direct profits," he said.

But according to El-Said, the successful implementation and completion of the government's economic reform and development plan require a sound infrastructure which will help lure investors to the country.

To avoid increasing domestic debt, added El-Said, the government is encouraging owners of short-term T-bills to exchange them for long-term bonds instead of claiming their value at maturity.

A break for reform

As Egypt awaits IMF approval for the implementation of the third stage of debt reduction, Mona Qassem reviews the preceding economic reform initiatives

An expected International Monetary Fund (IMF) stamp of approval for Egypt's plan for the third phase of economic reform on 11 October would pave the way for a 15 per cent debt reduction by the Paris Club of creditor nations, in accordance with Egypt's 1991 deal with the Paris Club to reduce half its foreign debt.

The five-year road to debt reduction has been a long and difficult one, riddled with disputes between Egypt and the IMF and the World Bank over the reform measures, as well as over the size of the debt itself. It was only recently that the World Bank revised its figures for Egypt's governmental foreign debt, bringing it to \$31 billion. The revision in the value of this part of the foreign debt came after the World Bank compared its figures to those of the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) and, in May 1996, knocked \$10 billion off the tab.

According to the agreement with the Paris Club countries, 50 per cent of Egypt's government-to-government debt would be cancelled in three stages. The first tranche, a 15 per cent share of the debt, was cancelled immediately and simultaneously with Egypt's signing of its first economic liberalisation and structural adjustment reform agreement with the IMF.

The second tranche was to be cancelled

on January 1993, but was delayed for nine months, until September, when a second agreement was signed on another phase of the economic reform programme.

The reduction of the third tranche of the debt, scheduled for June 1994, was postponed due to disagreements between Egypt and the IMF over the implementation of the reform programme. The ensuing argument resulted in a two-year delay which cost Egypt roughly \$650 million in interest payments.

Disagreement between the two sides was mainly due to Egypt's rejection of the IMF's suggestions to lower the value of the Egyptian pound by 30 per cent, to LE4.4 per dollar, in order to increase the competitiveness of Egyptian exports. These suggestions were rejected by the Egyptian government for fear that devaluation could lead to an increase in the import bill, and consequently to serious inflation. Higher import bills would have also meant higher costs for producers

who use imported inputs, a problem which would have indirectly harmed the export-oriented industries.

Experts estimated that if the pound were to be devalued, Egyptian imports would increase by about \$15 billion, while the tranche to be written off amounted to only \$3.9 billion.

As a result, Egypt would have been subjected to an ordeal similar to that faced by Mexico after it lowered the peso's exchange rate. To increase exports, the government instead embarked on other export promotion policies, such as encouraging producers to upgrade their performance and open new markets.

In September 1995, negotiations between the two sides were resumed after the IMF witnessed an improvement in the performance of the Egyptian economy. And now, one year of talks is expected to bear fruit this week with an agreement that could make the reduction of the third tranche of debts possible.

The progress made in improving the

performance of the Egyptian economy has been the result of five years of radical changes and new policies.

The IMF/World Bank-supported programme began in 1991, with a focus on tightening monetary and fiscal policies. The first steps were aimed at lowering the budget deficit, curbing inflation rates and achieving a 'substantial economic growth. The banking sector led the first stages of reform.

These reforms started with fiscal adjustments. Interest rates were offered in a weekly tender, with the government issuing short-term treasury bills that served the dual purpose of absorbing liquidity in the market and giving an indication of market-acceptable interest rates.

The resulting increase in interest rates on Egyptian pound deposits, and the slump of interest rates on dollar deposits, encouraged a shift from the phenomenon of 'dollarisation' which had dominated the market since the late 1980s. External capital inflows of foreign currency from

Egyptians abroad was one favourable product of these policies.

Other reform measures included liberalisation of commodity prices, especially agricultural goods, and foreign trade liberalisation, which included the removal of import bans and the gradual reduction of tariffs. The programme then focused on minimising state ownership of public sector enterprises, a policy which helped launch the most important part of the reform programme, privatisation.

Although it is well on its way, the privatisation programme raises serious social issues, chief among which is the probability that a large number of workers could be laid off in the process. The socio-economic ramifications of this problem top the government's lists of concerns as it moves ahead with privatising state-owned industries.

On the legislative front, Egypt has done much in the way of adapting its laws to its new market-oriented economy. The new public sector, capital market law and banking laws are but a few of the pieces of legislation that have been passed by parliament in the past few years.

However, much remains to be done in this domain. As Egypt works to attract more investment, the passage of the proposed comprehensive investment law would be instrumental in this regard.

EU education grant

MEMBER states of the European Union have agreed to provide an LE430 million grant to the Egyptian Education Enhancement Programme (EEP).

The EEP aims to raise the literacy rates in all Egyptian governorates, with a focus on areas identified as educationally less-privileged. This programme will also concentrate on increasing school enrolment and reducing the number of students who drop out. Another EEP goal is to make education more responsive to local requirements.

Part of the EU fund will be used to strengthen the ability of the national and governorate institutions in the planning, managing and monitoring of the primary education programme.

The grant is part of the EU's 1996-99 MEDA programme, which seeks to provide financial and technical support to non-member Mediterranean countries.

MENA tourism

TOURISM investments will be topping the agenda of the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit scheduled to be held in Cairo in November.

Egypt's Minister of Tourism, Mamdouh El-Beltagi, said Egypt is planning to submit three major tourism development projects at the conference, the first of which is a project for the area of Foka-Ras El-Hekma, on the country's northern coast where a number of resorts and hotels are to be built.

"It is expected that tourism investments will increase in that area especially after the decision to build an airport in El-Alamein," Beltagi said.

Another project along the northern coast, in the area between Edku and Rosetta, is also to be submitted. The third project covers the area of Wadi El-Gemal on the Red Sea coast of Hurghada. Numerous Arab and foreign investors are expected to contribute to this project.

"All of these projects are well researched, and the detailed preliminary feasibility study was prepared, including the site, the condition of the infrastructure, location of attractions, expenses and job opportunities expected to be provided," El-Beltagi said.

A princely price for the 'fruit queen'

Unsuitable weather and disease have hit this year's mango crop, reports Zeinab Abul-Gheit

The shelves of Cairo's street-side fruit vendors did not boast as many mangoes this season as they did in the past. And those mangoes that were to be found, even during peak season, ranged in price from LE5 to LE20 per kilogramme, a 30 per cent increase over last year.

The reasons behind the smaller-than-usual harvest this year, say agricultural experts, were unfavourable weather conditions and an unexpected infestation of disease in the crop.

Mikhail Boutros, director of the Tropical Horticulture Research Department at the Horticulture Research Institute (HRI), said

that the decline in this year's mango crop is due to the fact that the mango fell victim to high temperature, rains and the Khamsin winds. It was also infected-fungal diseases. Together, these factors resulted in a three to four ton per feddan drop in mango yield this year.

In a bid to avoid a recurrence next year, the HRI has undertaken extensive research to improve the per feddan productivity of the crop. According to Boutros, the methods to be implemented include cultivating more productive species and solving the problem of the salinity and the high rate of calcium carbonate in the soil. The HRI is

also planning to provide farmers with more productive seedlings of mango.

Although the yield per feddan nationwide was less than last year's, some producers managed to do better than others by following methods which though unconventional, were useful. Mohamed Nagi, who owns a mango farm in Fayed, said he left the crop without watering for three months, and used potassium and urea fertilisers. His harvest, about 3.5 tons per feddan, was double that of his closest neighbours. Nagi said that he sold the superior kinds like Owais, Taymour and Hindi at LE6-10 per kilogramme. These varieties of mango retail

for LE15-16 on the market. Inferior varieties, he said, earned him LE3-4 per kilogramme, and are sold on the market for LE6-7.

In parallel efforts, a joint Egyptian-United States Agency for International Development project, aimed at improving the productivity of the mango crop, is being carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA).

Fayal Abdel-Rasoul of the MOA's Technology Utilisation and Transfer Project said the project provides grants to researchers at universities and research centers to enable them to assist private sector producers and exporters to find solutions for problems

confronting the mango crops.

Abdel-Rasoul said that so far, 25 grants were provided to researchers for experiments to be carried out in private sector orchards. Studies are also being carried out to assess the best methods of irrigating and fertilising mango crops in the Ismailia, Sharqia and Giza governorates.

While mangoes are mainly cultivated in the Ismailia and Sharqia governorates, over the past three years nearly 15,000 feddans, mostly in newly-reclaimed areas in Nobariya, were added, bringing the total area used for mango cultivation to over 50,000 feddans.

Market report

Suez Cement drops in LSE

THE GENERAL Market Index witnessed a slight 0.3 point decrease, closing at 234.49 for the week ending 3 October. Experts attribute this slight decline in the market to problems related to the implementation of the new Central Depository dealing system. Although the GMI registered only a marginal decrease, the volume of transactions plummeted to LE266.55 million, from LE430 million the week before.

Despite the drops, shares of milling companies continued to be the most actively traded stocks on the market, with the East Delta Mills Company leading the pack as 600,000 of its shares changed hands over the week. While trading of the stock accounted for 15.33 per cent of total market transactions, the company's share price remained unchanged at LE31. Shares of the Upper Egypt Mills Company gained LE8.5 to close at LE48.5, while those of the Middle and West Delta Flour Mills gained LE6.25 per share to close at LE54.

In trading of shares of other manufacturing sector companies, the Arab Company for Pharmaceuticals and Chemical Industries' stock gained LE30 to close at LE40, after the company offered 20 per

London Stock Exchange, shares of the Suez Cement Company fell by LE5.5. While investors tried to get over their shock, market experts cited investor rush to sell off their holdings in order to benefit from the publicity surrounding the listing as being the main reason behind the decline in share value. Also dropping in value, shares of the Alexandria National Iron and Steel Company lost 14.93 per cent of their opening value to close at LE45.3.

The problems in the manufacturing sector were mirrored in the financial sector, whose index fell by 1.56 points to close at 284.1. Shares of the National Societe Generale Bank lost LE8.75 to close at LE51, and those of the Commercial International Bank declined in value by LE5 to level off at LE465.

Breaking free from the pack, shares of the Misr International Bank (MIBank) gained LE9 to close at LE375, while those of Medinat Nasr Housing and Development gained LE4.5 to level off at LE147. In all, the shares of 21 firms increased in value, 28 decreased and 35 remained unchanged.

Edited by Ghada Ragab

Lisez

En vente tous les mercredis

☐ **Processus de paix**
Hébron pierre d'achoppement

☐ **Sommet de Washington**
Un échec attendu

☐ **Syndicats des ouvriers**
La privatisation au centre du débat

☐ **Accord avec le FMI**
La croissance et le chômage

Hébron, pierre d'achoppement

☐ **Entretien**
La mini-révolution du ministre de la Santé

☐ **Ali Hassan, nouveau patron du HCA**
Des promesses de changement

Rédacteur en Chef Exécutif
Mohamed Salmawy

Président et Rédacteur en Chef
Ibrahim Nafie

Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

"Jewish settlers in Palestine" read the headline of a five-column article in *Al-Ahram* about Jewish immigration to Palestine at the end of the 19th century. Today, about a century later, the issue remains a thorn in the side of the Arabs, which the late political writer and columnist Ahmed Behaeddin had described as "the crime of the age".

The *Al-Ahram* article begins, "One of the important topics to grip the writer's pen and the circles of public debate is the question of the Jewish settlers in Palestine. Over the course of several decades, their yearning for this just and their passion for refuge in the Holy Land has become so intense that it aroused doubts and suspicions in the mind of the Supreme Porte. Therefore, the imperial government has blocked their entrance and repelled them at the ports of Jaffa and Haifa. It has turned its eye toward their smallest encroachment so as to prevent it from taking root for fear it may assume grave proportions. Thus, no matter where they turn in their quest for entry, they find a barrier before them."

This depiction of the early phases of Jewish penetration into Palestine appeared in *Al-Ahram* of Saturday 29 April 1896. The issue had aroused the concern of the newspaper since the early part of that decade. This was the decade that marked the birth of the Zionist movement at the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897, although the portents of its birth had preceded it into Palestine and also into the Sinai which witnessed part of these early attempts at infiltrating the Holy Land.

There were numerous proposals for the creation of a national homeland for the Jews. The following three foreign news agency reports which appeared in *Al-Ahram* in March and April 1892 provide an idea about how this movement developed. The first story reported, "There will be many more Jewish immigrants this

year than there were last year, especially from Poland. Many families have made preparations to leave and are only waiting for spring to arrive." The second and third wire releases came from London. They predicted an enormous wave of Jewish refugees to arrive that same spring as a consequence of which "the members of the House of Commons were urged to oppose a bill of law that would prevent their immigration into England." The British foreign secretary, addressing the House of Commons, said, "There is no law preventing Russian Israelites from entering the country, but England remains alert and vigilant."

Several venues had been suggested for a Jewish homeland, none of which included Palestine. These were Argentina, Cyprus and China. These did not work and the true destination of the Zionists remained Palestine.

The project to settle in Palestine was launched in earnest in the First Zionist Congress that met in Basel at the end of August 1898. The resolution that emanated from this congress read, "It is the Zionist aim to establish a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine and it seeks the following means in order to achieve it: to take the appropriate measures to promote the colonisation of Palestine by Jewish farmers and industrial workers; to unite the Jews with their organisations to strengthen the national feelings of the Jews; and, finally, to take the preparatory measures to obtain the assent of the European nations to achieve the Zionist aim."

Commenting on this resolution, *Al-Ahram* listed several reasons why the Assembly in Basel selected this quarter of the Ottoman Empire. Firstly, it said, the imperial government had always shown compassion for the Jews whenever they were subjected to persecution in Europe. "The Jews have always been aware of this merciful disposition ever since the Jews of

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Jewish immigration to Palestine — the root of today's woes in the Middle East — began some years before the 1897 congress in Basel, Switzerland, gave birth to the Zionist movement. The Ottoman government, which then had sovereignty over Palestine, tried to restrict Jewish immigration. The curbs worked to a large extent until 1905 when a combination of factors — corruption in high places in the Ottoman government and a new wave of persecution of Jews in Russia — opened Palestine's gates to a steady Jewish influx. On the basis of reports published by *Al-Ahram*, **Dr Yunan Labib Rizq** traces the beginnings of a century of crisis

Spain fled the massacres and imprisonment by the Spaniards and sought refuge with the Mamelukes in the imperial government and took up residence in Istanbul, Izmir and other cities." Secondly, the Jews were enticed by the prospects of the land itself. "These lands are generally productive, the resources for prosperity are profuse, they are sparsely populated and sweet water sources abound — all of which fired their fervour to settle amidst its beautiful slopes where they can raise religion and the worldly, the temporal and the divine." The newspaper expressed its fears that some of the more zealous Jews in Europe and the United States "would not be content to seek asylum from persecution in the vicinity of the tombs of the prophets. They have revealed their intention to found a colony and establish a state. Toward this end they have created a society called Zionism the aim of which is to regain possession of Palestine and to bring all the Jews together under a single banner in the promised land and other such fantasies. This declaration of their designs has served to caution the Supreme Porte not to permit them entry

into this stretch of land."

While the Jews had certain reasons to believe that their quest would succeed, circumstances would compel the Ottomans to defeat it at all costs.

The Zionists reasoned that they could take advantage of the financial difficulties that encumbered both Istanbul and Cairo during this period as a result of their enormous debt burdens. By offering to rid the Ottoman government of its debts they felt that it would accede to their requests. As *Al-Ahram* commented, "The Jews are investing every expense towards this aspiration and may even pay all the imperial government's debts were it to grant them a base in Jerusalem." Indeed several items in the newspaper point to the activity toward this end. On one occasion American Jews met in Milwaukee "and decided to launch a fund-raising campaign in all countries for the purpose of purchasing Palestine from the imperial government." Baron de Rothschild was particularly active in this regard, paying numerous visits to Egypt, such as that which took place at the beginning of 1899 and lasted three months. There were also the contributions

made by wealthy Jews, such as Rothschild, in order to found charity organisations such as "the tuberculosis clinic for the treatment of Israelite patients." They also founded "an agricultural investment bank in Jerusalem with a capital of 450,000 German marks."

The Ottoman government was engaged in the policy of pan-Islamism as a defence against the European assault on its territories. It could not afford to make concessions, particularly of such a highly religious nature, to the Zionists which would inherently contradict the very nature of its Islamic project. The actions the imperial government took in light of these circumstances in order to thwart the Zionists' ambitions to colonise Palestine constitute a little known chapter in the history of the struggle, aspects of which are revealed to us by *Al-Ahram*.

From the outset, *Al-Ahram* strongly warned against allowing the Jews to buy land in Palestine. It said: "They are intent upon buying every plain and mountain so that within a month there would not remain a patch of land that had not been acquired by the Jews. It is wise, therefore, not to permit the Jews to buy land wherever they wish and not to allow them to gather in a single area where they would entrench their power and dominate."

From 1881 to 1903, the policies of the Supreme Porte not only succeeded in curbing Jewish immigration, but in reducing the numbers of Jewish settlers in Palestine. The number of Jews in Palestine during this period never exceeded 3,000, whereas over the following 20 years it rose to 40,000. That such numbers managed to penetrate the legal barriers the Ottomans had erected suggests the existence of gaps, some of which we discover in *Al-Ahram*.

One of these gaps was due to the corruption in the Ottoman administration. Bribery of government commissioners

proved a sure route to permanent residence and even the secret purchase of land. Already in 1901 a sizeable community of Jews lived and worked in Palestine on Jewish-owned property as is evidenced by a report in *Al-Ahram* on 22 March which covered disturbances "in the Israelite agricultural sites which had been established by Baron de Rothschild in Palestine and which were later transferred to the Israeli Development Company." The report relates that the Israeli workers had revolted against the new administration because of maltreatment.

Another factor behind increased Jewish settlement was the intensified efforts by the Zionist movement to get the Supreme Porte to ease restrictions. *Al-Ahram* reports that the leaders of this movement "have taken considerable pains to allay the fears of the sultan and to convince the government to sell broad tracts of land to the Jews so that they might establish their colonies. Evidently, the founders of this movement, who have requested Ottoman citizenship for the immigrants, are prepared to spend millions of francs toward achieving their objective." A subsequent article warned that "the Zionist agency intends to unite the Jews of the world and bring them back to the promised land in Palestine in order to restore the glory of Israel."

In spite of these attempts, Jewish immigration remained limited until 1905 when another wave of persecution broke out against the Jews and other minorities in Russia. Afterwards, the floodgates would open to the Jewish penetration of Palestine.

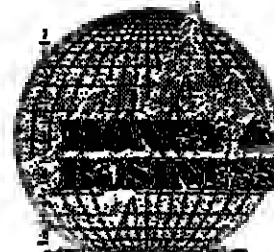
The author is a professor of history and head of *Al-Ahram* History Studies Centre.



German hockey team to visit

THE EGYPTIAN Hockey Federation and the German Evangelic School (DEO) in Cairo have invited the German hockey team of Schleswig-Holstein state to visit Egypt from 8-16 October for contact with Egyptian hockey teams. The hockey players are aged from 17-23. Their games will be held during the visit. In addition to these games, the hockey team will meet the German ambassador to Egypt, Wolf Dietrich Schilling, at the German Embassy in Cairo. This visit is one of many other visits by international teams in different sports to encourage the experience of differing team strategies.

MONEY & BUSINESS



CIB on London Stock Exchange

ESSAM El-Din El-Ahmedi, chairman of the board of Banque Misr, said that the Commercial International Bank of Egypt has completed registering its Global Depository Receipts (GDRs) on the London Stock Exchange.

Requests for share purchases numbered 22,000 for 3,607 million shares with a value of 1,118 billion. The greatest amount of requests for shares came from 21,312 individuals out of the 22,000 total requests. This indicates that families are interested in investing their savings in sound investments.



EgyptAir has added a scheduled service to New York on Friday. In addition to its service on Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday. Service to Los Angeles has been expanded to include Tuesday and Saturday on EgyptAir's 747 Jumbos and Boeing 767/300.

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NBE introduces local and foreign mutual funds

DEVELOPING the Egyptian capital market is considered one of the main pillars of the National Bank of Egypt's (NBE) strategy during the current stage of the country's economic reform programme, especially after it proved to be one of the most important emerging capital markets. Accordingly, it bodes well for the future as a strong magnet for local and foreign investments and as a driving force for the Egyptian economy along its path towards achieving satisfactory growth rates, envisaged to reach 8 per cent by the end of the second millennium.

NBE, which established the first mutual fund (with cumulative return) in Egypt, followed by another mutual fund with a periodic return in addition to a company to manage the mutual funds, has again taken the lead and concluded an agreement for raising a financial pool comprising various institutions as well as local and foreign businessmen with a capital of LE200 million. The said pool aims at purchasing shares in the companies offered for sale in the framework of the Egyptian privatisation programme which gained great momentum early this year.

In cooperation with the Banks' Association of Egypt, NBE has also blazed a trail previously untrodden in Egypt, i.e. forming working groups for the establishment of closed equity funds with Egyptian investors with a total invested capital of LE1.2bn. Such groups are envisaged to be formed soon.

Simultaneously, NBE is also establishing a number of joint foreign mutual funds with a view to courting and encouraging foreign capital; being the bedrock of the stock exchange recovery and the progress of economic activity in general. Hence, NBE has co-established, with a foreign partner represented by a great number of global financial institutions, the first foreign mutual fund in Egypt with a capital of US\$40 million. The fund's main purpose is to invest in securities listed

and traded on the stock exchange.

The said fund shall be managed by AL-Ahly Concord Company which is a joint company between NBE and International Concord Group which manages the equivalent of some US\$1.5 billion in mutual funds for companies and individuals. It is noteworthy that the fund's shares were listed in the London Stock Exchange to be the first mutual fund in Egypt traded internationally.

Moreover, NBE initiated another mutual fund namely the Egypt Trust with a capital of US\$75 million distributed between the local partner, 40 per cent and the foreign partner, 60 per cent. This fund is to be established in cooperation with the Lazard Brothers Institution which will also undertake the functions of the investment manager. Lazard manages investments totalling US\$32.4 billion, of which some US\$560 million are accounted for by the emerging markets. Besides, NBE acts as the loyal advisor of this fund.

In addition to these ambitious steps, NBE will establish, in cooperation with the Alliance Capital Institution, a fund and a management company with an authorised capital of LE1 billion and a paid-up capital of LE300 million.

In fact, these dedicated efforts have assumed a pivotal role for NBE in boosting the national economy.

More profits with Faisal Bank

ABDEL-Hamid Abu Moussa, governor of the Faisal Bank of Egypt, stated that the board of Faisal Bank approved the final accounts of the current fiscal year. Auditors of the bank also approved the accounts. The general assembly of Faisal Bank will convene on Thursday, 14 November 1996 to discuss the annual report on the bank's activities including the balance sheet for the profit and loss accounts, Moussa added.

The figures achieved indicated that the volume of balance rose to LE6424.8 million with an increase of LE198.3 million over the previous year. The volume of deposits reached LE5100.7 million, achieving LE167.4 million increase over the same period in the previous year.

Investment balance also moved upwards, reaching LE5825.6 million with a sum of LE160.3 million increase.

Shareholder's capacity totalled LE151 million. A 5.1 per cent increase was achieved as revenues rose to LE307.8 million in comparison with LE349.8 million in the previous year. Faisal Bank also achieved a surplus of LE318.1 million, representing a 4.8 per cent increase.

The volume of profits to be distributed for depositors amounted to LE275.4 million in comparison with LE245.9 million in the previous year.

Moussa also indicated that Faisal Bank established and holds shares in 38 companies operating in different fields. The capital of these companies amounts to LE409 million plus US\$593.5 million of which Faisal Bank owns LE129.9 million and US\$47.7 million respectively.

Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt Financial Statement May 1995 - May 1996

Figures achieved in LE	As of May 18, 1996	As of May 29, 1995	Growth rate %
• Total balance	6424.8	6226.5	3.2%
• Deposits	5100.7	4933.3	3.4%
• Investment balance	5825.6	5665.3	2.8%
• Revenues	571.1	508.0	12.4%
• Total Revenues	367.8	349.8	5.1%
• Surplus	318.1	303.5	4.8%
• Shareholders equity	275.5	245.9	12.0%

Through its activity, Faisal Bank is playing an active role in enhancing the vital sectors in Egypt for purchasing equipment and other requirements.

The volume of financing reached LE 3.3 billion through 9432 transactions. Besides, Faisal Bank established and holds shares in about 38 companies whose capital amounts to LE 409 million, plus \$ 293.5 million of which the bank owns LE 129.9 million. The bank also owns shares worth LE 43.7 million.

Faisal Bank also established the Zakat Fund. Revenues of this fund witnessed remarkable growth and reached LE 48.1 million. Part of this sum is given as loans to be paid back free of interest. Loans provided by the bank reached LE 500,000.



The Obaiyed Gas Sales Agreement



Dr. Hamdi Al Banbi, The Minister of Petroleum is standing between: Engineer Abdel Khalek Ayad chairman of EGPC, right, and Mr. Roger Patey chairman of Shell Companies in Egypt.

On the 26th September, 1996 the Obaiyed Gas Sales Agreement was signed by the EGPC and Shell Egypt. This Gas Sales Agreement provides for the delivery of gas from Shell's Obaiyed concession in the Western Desert to EGPC's national gas distribution grid in the vicinity of Sidi Kerir. Gas deliveries will commence in the 1st half of 1999 at a delivery rate of 300 mm scf / day (million standard cubic feet per day). This major development project, costing around US\$ 600 million, will be implemented by Bapetco. To date Shell has invested US\$ 150 million in exploration and appraisal activities in this concession since 1989. This is the largest gas project in Egypt and will make a major contribution to Egypt's economy and its objectives of promoting and expanding domestic gas consumption and subsequently developing export opportunities. Shell is proud to be involved in this major project and would like to recognise the encouragement received from the minister of petroleum:

Dr. Hamdi Al Banbi

Al-Ahram Weekly

Netanyahu's last chance

As the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, under way since 6 October, continue, yielding little more than a stalemate, Netanyahu is in a truly onerous position. How do you, after all, justify to the world, and your citizens, the aim of a building a stable region devoid of violence when the means you have employed to realise peace have resulted in the systematic and continuous deconstruction of all previous agreements? Trust is gone. Hope is but a quickly dying flame, ready to be extinguished at any time with the outbreak of renewed violence.

And violence is sure to be the outcome if Netanyahu continues to reside in one world while the rest of us on planet Earth seek to sort through the mockery he has made of the peace process. If history has taught us anything, it is that mindless banters, for which Netanyahu has become the undisputed master, is no substitute for commitment and compromise.

In the name of security, Netanyahu is willing to jeopardise the lives of thousands, deny them their right to autonomy and economic prosperity — so long as 450 squatters can have their bodyguards. But, if the Hebron troop redeployment talks continue at their current pace, the security Netanyahu seeks to guarantee on all accounts will be a thing of the past.

These talks may indeed be, as the Israeli prime minister noted, a "fresh start for peace", but for them to lead anywhere but down the sewer, he must come to terms with some realities other Arab and Israeli leaders have understood long ago. No longer can he allow hard-line elements in his cabinet to lead him by the nose. No longer can he seek to re-negotiate agreements already hammered out in the past. And no longer can he allow himself to embrace the misconception that the Palestinians, and the rest of the Arab world, are anxious to seek anything less than a just and comprehensive peace based on those principles agreed upon in the Oslo Accords.

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures from extraordinary individuals, not ordinary rhetoric from inadequate men posing as leaders in ordinary times — and these, despite failings of imagination, are extraordinary times.

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No compromise of ideals

Peace does not emerge in a vacuum, nor should it be confused with surrender, writes
Ibrahim Nafie



peace recognising Arab and Palestinian rights. Egypt believes that Netanyahu's attempts to renege on the implementation of Israel's commitments in this regard will have disastrous consequences for peace. If, therefore, Egypt has adopted a decisive stance against the Likud's — and Netanyahu's — deviousness, it is only because of its keenness to promote peace, towards which end it is endeavouring to force Israel to honor its pledges and abide by its agreements with the Palestinians.

Interest in the Badr 96 military manoeuvres is also only natural, and certainly does not mark any new departure. Egypt, like other nations, has absorbed the lessons of history, and knows that peace can only be protected when the countries that believe in peace have the military might to back up their faith. Only if a nation — any nation — is capable of repelling aggression and deterring belliger-

ent countries from embarking on reckless adventures with unpredictable results can it hope to safeguard peace. True peace relies on strength, on the capacity to defend peace. This is the philosophy of the Egyptian military in times of peace, and it does not conflict with the view that peace is Egypt's only, realistic strategic option. Peace between two nations, one of which is militarily powerful and the other weak or militarily debilitated, is not peace. Rather it is forced surrender and submission to the conditions imposed by the stronger party.

It is also only natural that the Egyptian people should evince pride and enthusiasm for these military manoeuvres. They too have learned the lessons of history and are eager to safeguard peace with the optimum means for achieving that lofty aim, which performance means a strong and independent military force.

That the morale of the Egyptian people should be lifted by President Mubarak's refusal to go to Washington is another reflection of the awareness of the Egyptian people.

The Egyptian people immediately perceived the wisdom of President Mubarak's decision and their sympathy with his position expresses popular condemnation of the Israeli prime minister's irresponsible behavior and his attempts to turn the clock back.

If such popular sentiments coincided with the anniversary of the victory of the October War, fusing this year's commemoration of the heroism of the Egyptian soldier and this major accomplishment of the Egyptian military with extra pride and ardor, there is nothing out of the ordinary in this. It was, after all, the October War that burst the illusion of Israel's inherent military superiority, of its ability to strike at any Arab country at will. The October War cleared the way for peace in the region. Is it any wonder, therefore, that we should celebrate this occasion with enthusiasm, marking as it does one of the most glorious chapters in modern Egyptian history? Nothing can alter the sense of pride Egyptians take in the memory of the October War. A people without a history is a people without a present or a future. A people capable of victory in a war waged to restore its territory and usurped rights is a people capable of sustaining peace and overcoming obstacles in its quest to build a better future. The climate of peace still prevails, and is not contradicted by events cited in the observations of the commentator. Egypt is fully aware of its commitments towards peace and equally aware of its national and Arab responsibilities. These are what guide its actions in the pursuit of its goals.

Is war a thing of the past?

On the 23rd anniversary of the October War this week, **Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** assesses the prospects of a new war in the Middle East

"No more war" was the slogan Netanyahu raised as he accused Arafat of inciting the spontaneous outbreak of Palestinian anger at the latest outrage perpetrated against them, namely, the pre-dawn excavation of a long-disputed archaeological tunnel running close to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. On the face of it, the slogan, which is an echo of the words used by Sadat during his 1977 Jerusalem trip, is a warning to Arafat not to resort to violence as a means of putting pressure on the Netanyahu government.

In fact, however, it was not only directed at the Palestinian Authority. Days before the Jerusalem Intifada, Netanyahu accused Egypt's Badr manoeuvres as being aimed against Israel, and denounced Syria's repositioning of troops in the Bekaa Valley as an ominous development. At the same time, Israel launched raids into southern Lebanon in retaliation for an alleged resumption of rocket attacks by Hizbullah. In fact, however, if anyone is interested in creating a war atmosphere it is Netanyahu himself, if only to contain internal dissent against the highly controversial and provocative policies that he is systematically pursuing.

In the context of a peace process established under the auspices of the great powers and with the support of the international community, war today would be a critical step backwards. This is in direct contrast to the situation which prevailed in 1973. At that time, the war represented a giant step forward, in the sense that it broke the "no-war, no-peace" stalemate and removed many of the obstacles standing in the way of meaningful peace negotiations. By then it was obvious that Israel had no intention of voluntarily relinquishing any of the territories it had seized in 1967. The Arabs realised that they had to force a military showdown to shake Israel out of its complacency and remind it that they too held cards and were not ready to accept the status quo established by the six-day war.

Some Arab critics at the time denounced the war as a ploy, to justify entering into negotiations with Israel rather than a genuine effort to achieve liberation. And, when negotiations were initiated in the immediate aftermath of the war, these same critics invoked Nasser's slogan that what had been seized by force could only be restored by force. But force need not necessarily mean only military force; after all, Clausewitz rightly defined war as "the continuation of politics by other means". The underlying logic of those who accused the 1973 War of aiming more at initiating negotiations with the Israelis than at restoring the occupied territories was based on the assumption that the Arab parties should not seek to make peace with Israel but ultimately to eliminate it. Today, it is Israel which is playing the war card as a means of scuttling the peace process at a time the most recent Arab summit adopted a resolution making an equitable peace with Israel the "strategic option" of the Arab states.

Despite this reversal of positions, the peace process still remains trapped somewhere between two ex-

tre scenarios. In one, it is subordinated to a dominant vertical contradiction between Israel on one side and the entire Arab world on the other. This scenario is characterised by acute polarisation and antagonism between the parties, and attains a climax whenever the breakout of all-out war between them is on the cards. In the other, the peace process is subordinated to a dominant horizontal contradiction, where polarisation is less between the Arabs and Israel than within each camp between the proponents of peace on the one hand and those of deterrence and war on the other.

The point is that, following the collapse of the bipolar world order, a full scale war between the Arabs and Israel is certain to be detrimental to the Arab parties. Even the October War, which came in the aftermath of Sadat's expulsion of the Soviet military advisors, was waged with Soviet weapons. After the disappearance of the Soviet Union, Israel is the only state in the Middle East which, thanks to its special relations with the US, can count on an unlimited supply of weapons, including the most sophisticated, in the event of a conventional war breaking out.

But hostilities in the Middle East need not assume the form of conventional warfare. The Arabs can resort to guerrilla warfare that Western powers now pejoratively dismiss as "terrorism". Actually, conventional war — in other words, the dominance of the vertical contradiction — gives Israel's hawks the upper hand while, by allowing the horizontal contradi-

tion to take precedence over it, a strategy can be developed to isolate Netanyahu from the peace forces in Israel and to ultimately deprive his policies, if not his person, of the support of the majority of Israelis.

At the press conference he held following the tunnel incident, Netanyahu came up with the following statement: "Who would have expected before the elections that, 60 days after I came to power, I would have developed a working relationship with Arafat and offered a mechanism for negotiations with the Palestinian Authority? ... and then you accuse me of obstructing the peace process!" This statement, followed by similar ones during his recent Washington summit with Arafat, can be interpreted in one of two ways: either as attesting to Netanyahu's success in convincing the extreme right-wing in Israel to move from its uncompromising anti-PLO stand and endorse the peace process; or as indicating that he has tailored the conditions for a resumption of the peace process to fit the demands of his most right-wing extremists. Judging by his unrepentant tone at the press conference and the "achievements" of the Washington summit and of peace negotiations since, the second reading of his statement would appear to be more accurate.

If it is, then the October War is unlikely to be the last Arab-Israeli war, even if the next war will take the form of generalised guerrilla warfare, not necessarily localised in any specific place or waged against Israel only, and not necessarily confined to the Middle East alone.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

Awaiting completion

By Naguib Mahfouz

The High Dam is one of the great engineering feats of the twentieth century and certainly the largest such project in Egyptian history. It has protected Egypt both from the droughts which have prevailed in other African countries and from occasional flooding which has afflicted cities south of the dam.

However, I would like to take this opportunity to say something a little startling — that the High Dam is not yet complete. We stopped in 1971, at that stage of the project that allowed us to benefit from its water storing and electricity generating capacities. But the dam also has many other potential uses which remain, as yet, unexplored.

The dam was the subject of fierce controversy throughout the seventies, controversy which I followed with considerable interest. At the time I asked the Specialised National Councils to send me a number of studies on the dam. Dr Abdel-Qader Hassan, chairman of the Councils at that time, kindly obliged and provided me with the full file of the dam, which contained a great many suggested projects none of which, to my knowledge, have been implemented. The High Dam is, I feel, a major resource on whose potential we have yet to fully capitalise.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week

Al-Ahram: "From the Israeli point of view, the process is no longer one of trading 'peace for land' or 'peace for peace'... but has become trading peace for settlements, Judaizing Jerusalem and besieging the Palestinians and holding guns against their necks. And if, after all this, the Palestinians should protest, confronting with stones one of the strongest and best armed armies in the world, Netanyahu screams that Israel's security is threatened!" (Ibrahim Nafie, 5 October)

Al-Shaah: "In this decisive phase in the region's history, we are witnessing significant changes — from surrender to awareness, from the illusion of a false peace to returning things to their true path. Things will never return to what they were before the Intifada. The people will not remain silent before these massacres, blood baths and threats to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Now every Arab ruler should review his position and keep in line with the people's will — that is, if he wishes to retain his seat of power." (Magdi Ahmed Hussein, 1 October)

Al-Mussawar: "Netanyahu's reading of the tunnel incident shows... a lack of awareness of the dimensions of the catastrophe. He is trying to convince himself that this is not a genuine Intifada, rather an incident contrived by Arafat. He is exploiting what happened in order to retreat from the peace process and undermine the Oslo principles. He has isolated the incident from the circumstances which led to the accumulation of Palestinian anger since he took over power and up until he triggered the devastating explosion. So can a permanent peace be foreseen, given the contradictions of this strange personality?" (Makram Mohamed Ahmed, 4 October)

Al-Arab: "Today no one is talking about closing the Borak tunnel nor about concerted Arab action to stop normalisation and regional cooperation — the economic conference will still be held in November. If we really want to face Israeli insolence we must cancel or postpone this economic summit. Those nations who have confined themselves to expressing reservations to Netanyahu's policies may then find themselves goaded to action to preserve their interests in the face of Arab anger. Do something more than just cursing Netanyahu!" (Abdallah El-Simawi, 7 October)

The people's will

Al-Wafd: "The most important aspect of President Mubarak's decision to boycott the Washington summit is that it expressed the will of the Egyptian people. He set the right course and drew the support of the masses in Egypt and the Arab and Islamic worlds. We should applaud this decision which takes into account the will of the people in a sea of political calculations." (Gamal Badawi, 3 October)

Akhbar El-Yom: "And now, after the festivities are over and Netanyahu has returned triumphant to Israel — if the Israeli press is to be believed — what should Arafat do? He has no choice but to immerse himself in his people and fight his last battle on Palestinian soil — one last decisive battle. This time he stands a good chance as he will not be fighting alone but will be supported by his entire people and half the Israeli people who have not backed Netanyahu and his deranged colleagues." (Mahmoud El-Saadani, 5 October)

Rose El-Youssef: "President Mubarak's refusal to attend the Washington conference was a true response to the Arab man-in-the-street and his rejection of Zionist-American hegemony. It was put a limit on arrogance so that the master of the White House should realise he cannot summon anyone he pleases and expect them to listen and obey. The US cannot continue to have the final say, calling meetings whenever it chooses and stopping nations' Intifadas whenever it pleases." (Abdallah Imam, 7 October)

Al-Ahali: "The solution does not lie in Washington or in Clinton's hands — it lies with the Arabs especially as each day shows that the US is not an honest broker or a fair umpire between us and the Israeli enemy. It is totally biased towards Israel and Zionism to a degree that there seems to be no great difference between Clinton and Netanyahu. If Clinton remains in the White House, his first action will be to move the US embassy to Jerusalem. This could be one of the reasons which led Netanyahu to open the tunnel now although it was dug years ago." (Lufti Waked, 2 October)

Compiled by Hala Saqr



In drawing Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi it is impossible to ignore the Pharaonic cast of his features, a product of his Nubian origins. His eyes are piercing, forever alert. His features are set with determination, and seem always to speak of a readiness for combat, a readiness that all those under his command will recognise.

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Jerusalem's Dome
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Close up

Salama A. Salama

Affluence is not stability

The Western media has exhibited as much interest in the Kuwaiti elections as it did in the tensions between the US and Iraq that erupted a few weeks ago. Foreign reporters in Kuwait to cover the elections outnumbered their Arab counterparts, with the majority coming from Europe. They came out of curiosity, to watch how Kuwaitis practice democracy and how parliamentary elections in this Gulf state are conducted.

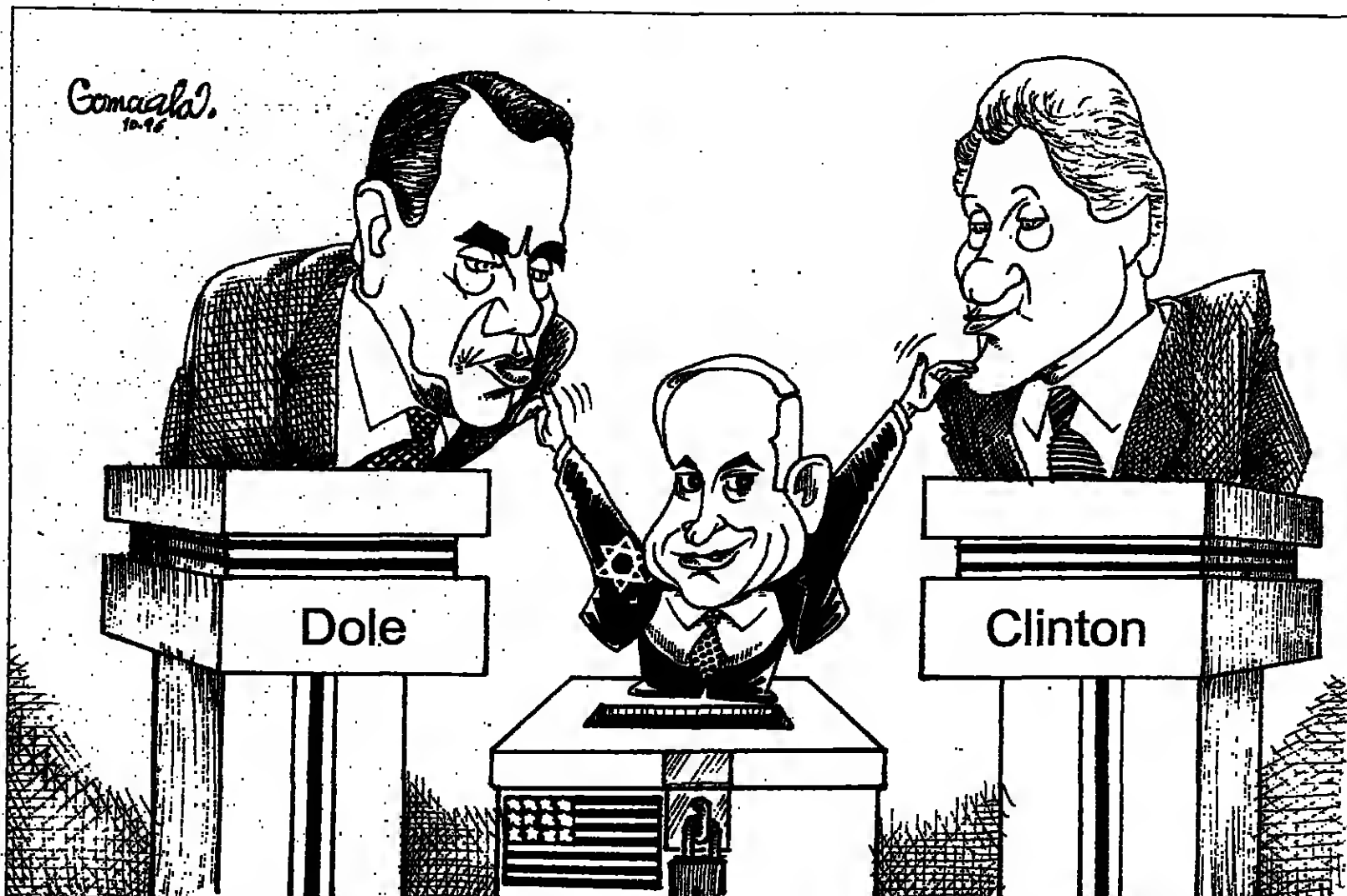
Two weeks ago, when missiles were launched from American military bases in the Gulf, the aim was not to protect freedom and democracy in Kuwait. The real goal was to buttress American political and military influence over oil reserves and to stifle political agitation from Iran and Iraq. But the situation in Kuwait will remain, from the viewpoint of many Western observers, a key to understanding other countries in the Gulf. Parliamentary elections, and the ensuing debates, afford an opportunity to observe the political and ethnic forces at work in a conservative but relatively open society like Kuwait. It is an opportunity unavailable in other Gulf states where political forces operate underground and their actions are consequently unpredictable.

The elections had a turnout of 80 per cent, which indicates keenness on the part of Kuwaitis to exercise their political rights. There was also considerable agitation by women, demonstrating their resolve to gain both the right to vote and to be candidates in elections.

The actual ballot, and the counting of votes, appears to have been a model of integrity, with the consequence that the results might be considered an accurate reflection of the stage Kuwaiti society has reached following the Gulf War.

Yet if the electoral process is unique to Kuwait, Kuwait itself shares many of the same problems as other countries in the region. And the bulk of these problems, which threaten the very identity of Gulf societies, result from the large numbers of expatriate workers, the majority of whom are Asian nationals. Such workers now account for 45 per cent of Kuwait's population, and fill 95 per cent of jobs. Such a high percentage of jobs, and the ensuing imbalances, and the ensuing problems, while they may not be a major preoccupation of ordinary Kuwaiti voters, who are in any case accustomed to being looked after by the state virtually from cradle to grave, certainly featured high on many political agendas during the election campaign.

Gulf societies face enormous challenges in the future, not only from external threats to their national security, but also from internal imbalances. And wealth and affluence, without the necessary social evolution, are not sufficient to guarantee stability.



Time for concerted action

Mustafa Kamel El-Sayed examines the limits on Arab options to revivify the peace process in the face a deep disequilibrium in the balance of power and Israel's essentially colonialist position

Many commentators on the Middle East view Netanyahu as an eccentric, a political leader dominated by an outdated ideological vision and out of touch with regional realities. This may well be true, but it does not seem to have prevented a large segment of Israeli public opinion, as well as the US administration, from supporting his 'outdated' ideology.

Certainly it would be a gross understatement of the dangers posed by Netanyahu to characterise him as no more than an eccentric, and his political motivations as being no more than an expression of ideological extremism. The Netanyahu phenomenon, far from having its roots in a skewed, individual psyche, is in fact a product of a fundamental disequilibrium of power in the Middle East. And unless this disequilibrium between Israel and Arab countries is redressed, the phenomenon will continue, either with the presence of Netanyahu himself, who is relatively young, or under other Israeli leaders who will continue with the same policies, in complete disregard of Arab interests and aspirations.

There can be no denying that Benjamin Netanyahu makes shrewd calculations. Certainly he would not be so foolhardy as to risk infuriating the American president — as he did recently at the Washington summit — without first being sure that he could get away with it, and that the US, Israel's major source of military and diplomatic support, would not punish him for his recklessness.

Netanyahu reads the regional and international situation in a particular way. And unless his reading is demonstrated, in practice and not in words, to be erroneous, he will continue to completely disregard Arab concerns, as will his political heirs. It has become imperative, then, for Arab governments to gauge the basic components of Netanyahu's reading of the situation.

The Israeli prime minister acts on the basis of a firm belief in the scientific, technological, economic and military superiority of Israel over all Arab countries. Israel is the region's sole nuclear power, and no Arab country is near to challenging this Israeli monopoly.

Netanyahu knows, too, that Israel is the only regional power that has put communications and espionage satellites into orbit, and that it possesses a technological base far superior to its Arab neighbours.

Israel's economic performance also gives its prime minister cause for satisfaction. Per capita income is close to \$15,000, practically putting it on a par with advanced countries. And the diplomatic position of his country also boosts Netanyahu's confidence, with both the Republican and Democrat parties vying to meet Israeli demands in both the White House and Congress. Russia, once a major supporter of Arab countries, is shying away from any gesture towards the Arabs that could meet with displeasure in Tel Aviv, while the European Community is strengthening its economic, scientific and technological ties to Israel.

Israel, Netanyahu feels, has nothing to worry about in the Middle East. And while it is true that his policies got Arab leaders to meet together for the first time since the second Gulf War, they met to offer him an olive branch and to extend the call for peace. He recognises that the Arabs remain deeply divided, and that they lack the military means to threaten Israel. He also believes that Israel can continue to prosper without Arab markets, since most of its foreign trade is with highly advanced countries.

Half of the Israeli population believes in the continued occupation of Arab territories. Given this fact, and Netanyahu's own perception of Israeli superiority on all counts, why should he change his policies?

What is quite certain is that the prime minister of Israel will not change his policies simply because the occupation of Arab lands is illegal. Nor is he likely to be convinced by the pointing out of the long term advantages that will accrue to Israel after any settlement.

Netanyahu's vision, after all, is essentially colonialist. He believes that force is the only way of dealing with the 'natives', and the natives, in our particular context, include not only the Palestinians but all Arabs. Only if disequilibria in the balance of power — i.e. force — are redressed will Netanyahu and his

followers ever be persuaded to change their minds, which means that there must be a redistribution of power in the Middle East in the Arabs' favour.

But how can Arabs act to alter the present situation?

Solidarity is an important weapon, but it must be seen to mean something, not be an empty slogan. The modest step taken this summer, with the holding of the Arab summit in Cairo, should be followed by other steps, including restoring Iraq to the Arab fold and offering assistance to both the Iraqi and Libyan peoples in the face of the unjust economic sanctions imposed on them by the US-dominated Security Council. Nor is it enough to suggest that Arab relations with Israel will depend on progress in the peace process, while at the same time promoting enhanced economic and diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv.

While there can be little doubt that the US will seek to maintain the present military imbalance between Israel and the Arabs, a second line of defence might involve demonstrating to the Israelis that the Arabs are capable of mustering sufficient will to palpably effect the running of daily affairs in the Occupied Territories and, by extension, in Israel. This does not, of course, mean military confrontation, but rather a policy of resistance and non-compliance with Israeli directives and policy aims. While engaging in such resistance it would be wise to maintain contacts with those forces in Israeli society that are more sympathetic to Arab rights, and to a peaceful settlement of outstanding issues, than the present, Likud headed government.

And despite American determination to underwrite Israel's military superiority, recent events — the Iraqi experience before the second Gulf War, and the experience of countries such as Iran and Pakistan in the aftermath of that war — demonstrate quite clearly that the international market for advanced technology and weaponry is far from being a monopoly under the control of the world's sole remaining superpower. The armaments market is in chaos, and the prevailing anarchy could well work in the favour of those countries which, discreetly and without too much fuss might

Soapbox

The right medicine?

The Doctors Syndicate is responsible for the standard, the status, the future and the level of practice of the medical profession. Nobody is allowed to practice in this country, whether Egyptian or non-Egyptian, unless he is registered with us either on a permanent or temporary basis. This registration is the prerequisite for a license to practice.

When, after the presidential decree in July allowing four private universities to open, these fledgling institutions announced their intention to accept students for medical faculties, the syndicate was, to put it mildly, surprised.

You simply cannot start a medical faculty without certain prerequisites. There must be a curriculum, at least eight labs for different specialisations, and — perhaps more important than anything — there must be a teaching hospital to train and educate medical students and prepare them to face the realities of medical practice and health care in the community.

The new universities say they are in the process of acquiring, or making deals, with certain private hospitals and centres in the 6 October City, though quite whether such hospitals will be able to offer the facilities required of a teaching hospital is by no means clear. We were also surprised to learn that there is as yet no official recognition from existing universities of the degrees offered by their private counterparts, which means that students are being invited to embark on up to seven years of very expensive education with no guarantee that the resulting qualifications will be officially recognised.

We have already voiced our concerns, and the syndicate has come up with a number of suggestions, including establishing a national committee responsible for licensing any new faculty, after first ensuring that it is capable of fulfilling its tasks, and that the qualifications it awards will be recognised.



This week's Soapbox speaker is president of the Egyptian Doctors Syndicate, member of parliament and a professor of cardiac surgery of Ain Shams University.

Hamdi El-Sayed

Making use of each and every drop

As the Nile floods into the Toshki spillway, Rushdi Said suggests a revision of the High Dam's operating rules to prevent any future waste of water

By the time this article goes to press it is likely that the waters of Lake Nasser will have reached 178 metres above sea level and will have started to flow into the Toshki depression in the Western Desert via a spillway dug to the northwest of the city of Abu Simbel. The plan to divert the lake's excess water into the Toshki depression, rather than into the main Nile, was conceived in the 1970s, when Lake Nasser had reached its operating stage and concern started to be voiced that the river would be unable to handle a high flood without incurring substantial scouring damage to the main channel, barrages and bridge foundations.

Under the operating policy of the river, enormous releases of silt-free water downstream of Aswan would greatly exceed the levels deemed safe for the Egyptian channel of the river and its structures. The problem would be compounded if the incoming flood were to be of the dimensions of the 1878 high flood, which carried 150 billion cubic metres of water or slightly less than double the quantity it carries in most years.

To avoid this situation the Ministry of Irrigation decided not to allow excess waters into the river but to divert them into a nearby depression in the desert near Toshki village. The purpose of the Toshki project was to create a safety valve to remove excess water from the High Dam reservoir by cutting a canal from the edge of Lake Nasser, north of Abu Simbel, through the Western Desert to the Toshki depression, where it would empty harmlessly into a barren desert. Any risk of scouring damage from a high flood would thus be averted.

The excavation of the Toshki canal began in 1978. The canal takes off from the village at a level of 178 metres above sea level and runs for 22 kilometres until it empties into the Toshki depression. It is designed to have a capacity of 275 million cubic metres per day. The amount of water that will spill over from the reservoir into the depression this year is expected to be in the range of 4 billion cubic metres.

The diversion of the high flood waters into the desert was not

an easy decision to make. It was taken in an atmosphere of urgency and crisis and was the safest alternative for decision makers to avert what they feared would be a great national calamity if the whims of the river allowed a high flood to follow a full reservoir. In the first place, it was an expensive undertaking, the project itself was costly — LE1.5 billion in 1995 — and the cost of its maintenance from the clements and encroaching sands of the desert were high. In the second place, the water diverted to the desert would be wasted.

Despite all that is being said, little can be made of this water from a practical point of view. The maximum use would be to grow a single crop of barley or wheat on a few thousand acres in the Toshki depression for a season. There is also the possibility that Egypt's position in any future negotiations with regard to the re-portioning of the waters of the Nile among the riparian states will be affected by something that seems to show, contrary to reality, that Egypt is a country with abundant water.

Certainly there appears to have been a degree of irresponsibility in recent statements, running counter to established facts, that Egypt floats on an enormous ground water reservoir. In reality, Egypt is a water-parched country at present and will become more so in the foreseeable future, and the water that is carried by the Nile barely satisfies the needs of the agricultural lands of the valley and delta and their inhabitants.

Much has been written about the potential use of the water that will be diverted to the desert. Many imagine that it will make possible the expansion of Egypt's agricultural lands and will convert its deserts into green. Unfortunately the additional water that Egypt will receive this year is a once-in-a-lifetime event and cannot form the basis for any long-term projects. The additional waters of this year are the result of a freak sequence of events which are unlikely to recur in the foreseeable future.

What is more, the water that will be diverted would not even have come to Egypt had Sudan withdrawn its full share of the

water allotted to it by the 1959 water agreement. So far Sudan has not been able to build enough storage capacity to accommodate its share of water. Nor will the bulk of the water that will be spilled in the Toshki depression form a source of surface water. Most of it will be lost through evaporation and seepage soon after flowing into the depression where the rate of evaporation is extremely high, exceeding 10 millimetres per day during the summer months.

The results of years of thorough scientific investigations of the ground water reservoir underneath the deserts of Egypt show its limited potential. That reservoir is finite. It is not replenishable; and whatever water is extracted will not be compensated for. Today about one billion cubic metres of water are drawn from the ground water reservoir underneath the stretch of Western Desert occupied by the oases of Kharga, Dakhla, Abu Minqar, Farafra, Bahariya and Siwa.

This amount of water is extracted at great expense; more than 90 per cent is lifted to the surface from 550 deep wells. In 1961 the amount of water extracted was in the range of 220 million cubic metres, 25 per cent of which was lifted from 27 deep wells and the rest from 1,513 surface wells. More than one third of the surface wells had to be abandoned during the 34-year period because of depletion and a drop in water levels.

This year's high flood should foreground the need to review and reconsider the operating rules of the High Dam in order to avoid a situation, such as that which Egypt today faces, in which it has to spill valuable water into the wastelands of the desert. Ministry of Irrigation officials should be among the first to direct their efforts toward this goal. They are, after all, the ones who struggle with this problem on a daily basis and who will be faced in the near future with an uphill battle with the upstream riparian states who are agitating for a larger share of the waters of the Nile emanating from their lands.

The present-day operating rules of the High Dam reservoir, set

in the 1960s, are still adhered to today, albeit with minor adjustments. They allocate the total capacity of the reservoir as follows: water below 146 metres (estimated 30 billion cubic metres) for dead storage and silt accumulation, water between 146 and 175 metres (estimated 90 billion cubic metres) for live storage, and water between 175 and 182 metres for flood protection.

These allocations necessitate the emptying of the reservoir before the arrival of the following flood so that the water level in the reservoir would not exceed 175 metres on 31 July. The release of the water is set to satisfy Egyptian agriculture which needs larger amounts of water during the summer months. There are small releases from September to February (3.6-3.9 million cubic metres per month) and larger releases during the summer months, peaking 6.9 million cubic metres in July. This is the maximum the Nile can yield without incurring scouring damage to its channel.

Because the maximum level of the reservoir was lowered from the originally planned 182 metres level to 178 metres (see my article on the High Dam in the *Weekly*, 5-11 September 1996), it is reasonable now to consider lowering the lake's level on 31 July from the set level of 175 metres in order to provide an increased capacity for flood protection. It is also possible to avert the spilling of water into the desert by adopting a new pattern for the monthly discharges from the High Dam by releasing additional water during the winter months. Initially this water would be wasted but ultimately it could be stored in one of the depressions of the northern delta for use during periods of shortage. These alternatives and others should now be the concern of the engineers responsible for running and operating the High Dam.

The writer is a US-based professor of geology and former chairman of the Egyptian Organisation for Geological Surveying. His most recent major work was entitled: *The River Nile, Hydrology and Utilisation*, published by Pergamon Press.

To The Editor

Israeli violations

Sir: Al-Aqsa Mosque is Islam's third holiest shrine. Israel's decision to open a 488 metre tunnel under Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque is a violation of Muslim religious rights which Israel should respect.

Israel must cease its policy of violations and violence including settlement expansion, closing the Occupied Territories, besieging the Palestinian people, demolishing their houses, and refusing the redeployment of its troops outside Hebron. It must also honour its commitments to peace and resume

negotiations for a comprehensive peace in the region. Shady Asmail Bahr Aswan

October memories

Sir: On the anniversary of the October War, I'd like to remind our new generation of that legendary victory.

A few months before the war, a psychological warfare launched against our people reached its climax. At a press conference in Jerusalem, the then

Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Dayan was quoted as saying:

"The cultural gap which separates Egypt from Israel is far wider and deeper than that of the Suez Canal. Israel has an invincible army and its air force has a long arm... The Bar-Lev defence line is impenetrable... Egypt has only defensive weapons, if it tries to cross the canal a debacle will befall it."

All of a sudden in the broad daylight of 6 October, Egypt stunned the world as 250 warplanes blasted the occupation forces in Sinai, pounding key positions. At the same time hundreds of can-

ons fiercely battered the Israeli bulwarks on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal.

Using pontoon bridges, amphibious tanks and floating crafts, the Egyptians were able to cross the most difficult water barrier of the canal and climb a 30-metre-high sand barrier while carrying their equipment and ammunition.

To the amazement of the world, the Bar-Lev defence line fell to the hands of our troops in a few hours. Infantry units and thousands of tanks poured into Sinai and were engaged in the fiercest battles ever known since World War II. Sam-6 anti-aircraft missiles secured safe crossing of our troops

and interdicted the Israeli warplanes to intercept.

Israel was taught an unforgettable lesson. The invincibility of the Israeli army was questioned and the long arms of their air forces were amputated. The military strategy of the October War has been taught at military academies all over the world.

The defeated generals, Moshe Dayan and his colleagues were sacked and thrown into the garbage bins of history. Mahmoud Elwasei Victory College Meadi

Costumes and dramas

Clothes maketh the man. And when they are the wrong clothes, even better, writes Nigel Ryan

Hassan Soliman's current exhibition of drawings at Extra Gallery, which runs until 26 October, is something of an event. Soliman exhibits infrequently. His shows are irregular events, though they always attract large crowds. And if the proliferation of red dots is anything to go by — practically everything included in the Extra show has already been sold — he is certainly an artist whose works meet with ready audience approval.

The bulk of the works on show take as their subject a single alleyway. In a preface to the exhibition, signed by the artist, he elucidates his intentions:

"This exhibition is a collection of studies of an old alley in Cairo with all the violations that have occurred: the ancient mixed up with the modern, the Cairenes mixed with the emigrants from the countryside and the actual daily life of nowadays. A vision that is not that of a Thousand and One Nights, nor does it carry a nostalgia of Cairo in the thirties. It is a vision of distress over my city which I curse and love."

The works appear to have been completed over a period of several years. The earliest in the series, which are generally the most colourful, are dated 1993, while the later works, increasingly monochromatic, are from the past twelve months. This time scheme would imply a certain development, a distillation of different visions of the same place, a study at different times of the day, and night, in different conditions of light, in different stages of dress and undress. Such is normally the rationale behind these kinds of serial paintings, or used to be, certainly in the case of the precedents the artist himself mentions in his preface. ("I have completed the same picture and subject more than once in the same manner that other painters have since Leonardo da Vinci through the Impressionists and up to Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock, so as to establish and confirm the experiments.") But this is palpably not the case.

There is, admittedly, something a little disturbing about these scenes, something that is not quite held in equilibrium. And it takes some time before the precise cause of the disturbance is worked out. It is banal, and perhaps merely the result of associations. Or maybe it is intended. For what Soliman does is to take as backdrop that vision of Cairo — the narrow street with overhanging buildings, with shadows in the corner and minarets looming in the distance, and then people it. He takes the backdrop, the theatrical box sets that appealed to the Orientalist painters of the 19th century, and then he allows the inhabitants to get on with



their business, to stroll, between the buildings, to gather in crowds on the street.

Now there is nothing particularly new about allowing people into the street. There is an entire school — or want of a better word — of bazaar artists who take the meticulously rendered scenes of 19th century Orientalists, crudely reproduce them in a few, vivid strokes, and then allow figures into their compositions, always in *galabiyas*, and usually carrying something on their heads. Everyone is familiar with these kinds of images — they clutter souvenir shops and hang in rows in so-called galleries. They serve a buoyant local market, and are taken away as souvenirs, though their actual relationship to the place they are intended to remember is at best tenuous, if it exists at all. They are the

painted equivalent of postcards, and equally disposable. They are not — and here I am happy to be unfashionable — they simply are not art.

You cannot, of course, say the same about Hassan Soliman, one of the most respected of contemporary painters. But what disturbs about his current show is precisely the nature of its relationship to the kind of paintings described above. The difference between Soliman, though, and the painters of the bazaar — not counting, of course, Soliman's own technical proficiency, his ability to draw and compose a picture — is that the *galabiyas* are missing. The bright colours have been subdued. The light is no longer brilliant but sinister. And the people, in several of these paintings, wear dresses, and trousers, and shirts. This might seem the

lost. And there is, too, in places, a tendency towards Dickensian schmaltz. In other drawings included in the show clothes become merely a conceit. There are two female figures wearing skirts of sorts, but in reality quite naked. These are nude studies though they are, superficially, dressed. Then there are precisely observed essays rather than the thumbnail sketches of the street. Ironically, the most successful of these, a woman with a bundle of laundry on her head, about to lose a shoe, harks back to the nostalgia in which the bazaar artists trade. Only here the differences are stark. For Hassan Soliman is capable, not only of observation, but of convincing draughtsmanship.

(For full details of the current show, see Listings opposite)

most mundane of observations but it is what lies behind the tension in a number of these works. They simply do not conform to the usual picture, a picture that has been fixed and remained unquestioned for so long that the cliché has reified into truth. Minaret equals tradition equals *galabiyas* equals picturesque equals saleable. The last part of the equation remains, of course, perfectly true, though the little red dots imply that other things, too, are saleable, though perhaps to a more knowing, a more self-satisfied middle class. The fact that Soliman's mix of traditional architecture (despite what the preface says, it is really not his intention to record the intrusion of modern, gentry-built, concrete constructions in traditional quarters) with Western dress should provoke that initial feeling of something being not quite right shows how deep one pictorial cliché can run.

For my money the most convincing pictures in this exhibition are those with people wearing clothes that you do actually see in alleyways. But Hassan Soliman has chosen to schematise his particular brand of realism and all too often places his figures in shadow, or in silhouette, so that the exact description of the garments, and hence the, in retrospect, shocking shock value of the pictures, is

Music

Brief for Joe

David Blake sees dark angels in a blue train



Cairo Symphony Orchestra; Brahms II; Piano Soloist Julia Zilberquit; Trumpet Magdi Baghaddi; Conductor Ahmed El-Saedi; Cairo Opera House, Small Hall; 3 October

And along comes Julia Zilberquit, Mme Mercury. Whatever it was you were expecting, she is still a surprise when she comes. A burst of bright colour, mostly Kandinsky yellow — clear and radiant, tall, warmly encouraging, stylish. She smiles, and to herself. Then zip: looking neither left nor right she bares down upon the piano.

She takes her place. There is the preparatory pause as she adjusts her piano stool. She extends her legs and transforms the Small Hall into an important area. A thought — she must be able to play, looking as she does. A nod to El-Saedi — then she lets off her ammunition at the key-board. She can play — and how. And so begins a night in the fast lane: a thrill with no spills. Pianists these days come and go in shoals like dress shoes, almost seasonal. Cairo gets its share, nameless though not by any means blameless. Don't put your daughter at the piano Mme Ahmed, too many there already, and she might easily be allowed off.

Up to now, the life story of Julia Zilberquit reads like a page of Who's Who. She comes from all the right places and is acclaimed in them. And this is something she knows. There is authority to every note and phrase. She has a direct line to the music at hand and the technique to deliver it.

The Concerto No 1 for piano, trumpet and strings, opus 35 — a striking piece — comes from the days when Shostakovich was one of the great hopes of twentieth cen-

tury music. He remained more a hope than a fulfillment because of the steely moonbeams of political Marxism captured and bound him. He escaped, but the moment was past. Unknowable Russia had maimed another great one. This trumpet and piano piece shows where he was — right in the centre of things after the Viennese bombshell had exploded.

The Cairo Symphony and El-Saedi went at it like a Saturday night disco session. They loved the beat and the sound, like London metro music. Big city sleaze, it stops you in your tracks — something old, something true, a tonic. Some of the pianists who have visited Cairo in the past few years have tried hard to drag classical piano music out of the wax works in which, after a century, it is stuck. The end of the millennium looms. Must Chopin, Beethoven *et al* be prisoners in the same traditional mortuary waiting-room? Being a catalyst on the blood-stained battle-fields in the pianistic arena is no easy job. Margaret Babinsky is one, Bengt Åke Lundin, Yasser Mukhtar and now Julia Zilberquit are others. These four have the strength and toughness to positively enjoy the struggle.

The audience at the concert got up and shouted for repeats. This concerto for two instruments, of which the piano is the leader, is a clever dialogue between them and an intrusive and amusing orchestra. Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata passes through the first movement telling of disturbances to come. The four movements are bound together not by key but by emotional intent.

The concerto says nothing is where it used to be. The romantic thing must come out of the cupboard, even if it is Mozart, to join in the dance of now, the dance of death. What is out there is nasty, but it must be expressed. That is the duty of any art. This music even says it with wit and colour. So pianist and conductor let us have all four movements almost entirely percussive. The piano range does use finger work, but mostly to rush from accident to fatal crash. Speeds are terrific. The sounds on the way are clean as Bach. No sticky pollution of chords. The trumpet plays a lesser role than the piano but adds acid and knife-edged cuts in the fabric.

Are trumpets necessary? For danger warnings and war perhaps. This trumpet was useful. The slow second movement of the concerto is sad and wayward. The piano gets off the percussion for more routine melodies, very Russian, upside down and cracked — exciting. The piano slithers into the last movement, nervous, tetchy and brilliant. Then it flies into furious speed. The trumpet enters — there is a sudden, genuinely huge crash on the piano with yelps from the trumpet. Imagination, enjoyment, explosion: a great spacious occasion in the Small Hall. Here is the piano going into the twenty-first century with Shostakovich's hissing and the wondrous dazzle and fury of Julia Zilberquit.

This loaded small concert opened with a composition of El-Saedi called *The Wild Desire* — four pieces of a suite for orchestra. The title is pure von Sternberg and so is the music. El-Saedi was trained in an international, hectic atmosphere and seems to know both ends of the scene. Berlin 1926 and Cairo 1996. His conducting and compositions are

explicit. These four pieces are more oriental than heretofore, but they strike one immediately as fresh and with the oriental go-around this is not easy. He does it. We are in a blue train, but his angels are more than dark.

Ending was Brahms. Dear Joe, we love you so. No dressing up for Brahms: this is the Small Hall. This piece is very dangerous, very deep Brahms. El-Saedi knows Brahms and always proceeds to undress him. Garment by garment is peeled off until, stopping where local propriety demands, he shows the sacred old icon, sans beard, black suit and gaiters, in wide-leg pants and sloppy jacket, striding along, coping with the awful comedy of life.

The serenade looks long on the page though it is not. Positively brief for Joe, it begins softly vernal then grows busy. There are robust sounds deep and *blen plente* with cold autumnal lights floating over the top. It proceeds as a hefty stinging-plucking effects from Brahmsian deeps to high flights which, meant to be unerving, succeed. Blasts of brass give worldly warnings that this is no sentimental serenade to loved ones. It is a comment on the terminator, at work on the destruction of old palaces. Where are you, old acquaintance? Gone on the longest jump. And how was the landing? Same old story, same old us. Are you listening — it's a scream.

So Joe? No answer. And the serenade ends. One of Cairo Opera's best nights. Life does come into the opera sometimes, if not as opera at least as concertos: hard-edged, funky, showing that everyone must learn the steps of the ritual fire dance.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Hassan Soliman (Paintings)
Extra Gallery, 5 El-Nessim St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 26 Oct.
A new showing of works by one of Egypt's most celebrated painters, concentrated on the alleyway Khosh Kadim.

Mahmoud El-Afifi (Paintings)
Ezzat Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 3436. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 4pm-9pm. Until 10 Oct.

Mohamed Said
Ezzat Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 3436. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 4pm-9pm. Until 10 Oct.

Aur Helia
Ezzat Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 3436. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 4pm-9pm. Until 10 Oct.

Egypt in the 1880s: Photographs by Jan Hansen
Ezzat Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 3436. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 4pm-9pm. Until 10 Oct.

Fayrouz Abdel-Hafiz (Paintings)
Ezzat Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 3436. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 4pm-9pm. Until 10 Oct.

Lella Ianni (Paintings)
Ezzat Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 3436. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 4pm-9pm. Until 10 Oct.

Marcelino and Futurism
Ezzat Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 3436. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 4pm-9pm. Until 10 Oct.

Deborah Doyle
Ezzat Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 3436. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 4pm-9pm. Until 10 Oct.

Najah Taher (Watermarks)
Ezzat Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 3436. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 4pm-9pm. Until 10 Oct.

The Cairo Art Guild
Ezzat Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 3436. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 4pm-9pm. Until 10 Oct.

Animals in Egyptian Art
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Blamung (Naive)
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341 2926, 12 Oct, 8pm
Nabila Elwan and Ali Miled perform melodies by Beethoven and Schubert. Directed by Nabil Elwan. (1989). With English subtitles.

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The death last week of Mohamed Shebl, film director, radio personality and for many years' *Al-Ahram Weekly's* film critic, was received with sadness by his colleagues in the film industry. Hala Halim spoke to his fellow professionals about a man who could be 'wickedly funny' without malice, and who, whatever the obstacles, remained determined to see the bright side of life



Plain Talk

It is always hard to write about a friend and colleague who has left us. The news of the death of Mohamed Shebl left us, his colleagues, shocked and incredulous. To us, and to many others who have known Mohamed Shebl, there was always this sense of promise about him, a whiff of plans about, of cinematic projects being brewed. It is painful to acknowledge that much of this will not come to fruition.

He was still young, and had great hopes for Egyptian cinema, dreams of assisting in rescuing it from the doldrums into which it had sunk. Through his intense readings and follow up on all that is new in the world of film industry, he was apt to assist in its development. He was, indeed, a walking encyclopedia of films and filmmaking.

My first acquaintance with Mohamed Shebl was through radio. I had noticed his voice presenting a music programme on the local European service. Though never a pop fan, the manner in which Shebl introduced and commented on the songs stopped me from switching the channel, as I normally would have. The second occasion was when I came across a film critique he had contributed to an Egyptian English language newspaper. His close knowledge of cinema technique kept me reading but also, I confess, his infectious, slightly mischievous sense of humour.

This is perhaps what characterized Shebl's writing. He could be scathing and at the same time hilariously funny. Describing the role of a female star, for example, Shebl writes: "In dirty, tattered jeans she drives her jeep like she was in a formula one grand prix. Her extra bleached blond hair is left to buff and puff like it was going to blow the whole house down and her language would make a sailor blush."

But, and this is in keeping with Shebl's character, he gives everyone in the film their due. "It would be unfair," he says, "to overlook the superb cinematography by... or the slick editing by... but the music, and especially the songs, amount to overkill." The oscillation between sarcasm and praise which characterised his reviews in fact reflected his passion for cinema and his apprehension about the local industry and its impending disintegration.

On the death of Salah Abu Seif, he published an evaluation of the director who, through a career lasting over half a century, was to leave an indelible imprint on the shape of Egyptian cinema. His article, entitled "Citizen of Egypt, is a great tribute to a great man. An essay in biography, it provides rigorous analysis of the school of Salah Abu Seif. Ending his article, Shebl writes: "There was a heavy, uneasy feeling on that sad morning when filmmakers and hordes of his students and fans gathered silently at his dignified funeral. It is a feeling that will continue for a very long time."

The same heavy, uneasy feeling is likely to continue among Mohamed Shebl's colleagues, both here at the *Weekly* and in the film world.

Mursi Saad El-Din

To be wickedly funny

"I met Mohamed sometime in 1979. I was living in Beirut then and I came to Cairo to meet Youssef Chahine who had just made *Istidriya Leih* (Alexandria Why?). Mohamed was preparing *Anyab* (Fangs). He had a company of his own and the company operated through Mir International, Youssef Chahine's company. We became friends immediately; we had a lot in common and he was very funny. He invited me to see the rushes of *Anyab*. It was the first time in my life I saw rushes (these are all the shots you've taken that you watch without sound to decide what you want to use). It was terrifying; I remember it was the most boring experience I had ever gone through in my life. And I remember behaving sort of rudely — I talked during the screening, but he was very patient and courteous. It was Chahine who told me to shut up at one point when I became out of hand."

Now, every time I see rushes, I know the anguish any director goes through because what you see is always either how stupid your dream was or how poor its execution. It's always a horrible experience to watch your own rushes, but you have to because it's your work. It's that very anguishing moment when you ask yourself is this what I wanted or not. I don't know if Mohamed was thinking that way at the time, but I know that if anybody in my rush screenings dared behave the way I behaved, I would have killed him. Well, Mohamed didn't kill me, and we became great friends."

Then we saw a lot of each other, and I watched his films. I always had a problem with his films. The fundamental problem I had with Mohamed's films is this: he wanted to specialise in a particular genre, the horror film. I think the tragedy of waiting to do horror films in a 'country' like Egypt is that... well, you know for example that a film like the *Exorcist* was banned here. And *Rosemary's Baby*, although it was shown, was shown with trepidation."

Horror films are basically religious films; there is this fundamental thing of the battle between good and evil which are religious notions, and in a country where the sole arbiter of religion is Al-Azhar, you are bound to make concessions."

This morning I was asking myself what was it that really bothered me about Mohamed? Why it was that while we were such close friends in life, when it came to his films I always had an ambivalent feeling. Ahmed Kassem, who is a very dear friend of mine and of Shebl's, and who is a filmmaker himself, made a very sharp remark when he saw *Tawiza* (Talisman), to the effect that it was rare to find someone enjoying so much the actual fact of making a film and showing it in his films like Mohamed Shebl. It was obvious that for him making films was like playing with a big toy. He was behaving like a child, fooling around with a wonderful toy and communicating this to the spectator. And this is absolutely true, it is an aspect of

Mohamed's filmmaking that comes across. I remember in *Anyab* it totally came through in his choice of Hassan El-Imam, in his choice of Adawiyya and the songs he had commissioned for the film. The songs were great fun and Mohamed was the first to have discovered a potential genius in Adawiyya. We used to be incredible snobs; we'd just emerged from the students' movement and to us Ahmed Adawiyya was yucky. Mohamed had the feeling that Adawiyya could move so many people with his singing and with his rhythm. He is definitely a genius about whom Mohamed was a hundred per cent right and I, I am ashamed to admit, was wrong. There was something, again this sense of perceiving — and I liked this about Mohamed — of provocation. Because the bourgeoisie thought Ahmed Adawiyya not *frequentable*, it was not quite in good taste to cast him."

There was this impossible aspect to Mohamed which, in my opinion, was at once his strength and his undoing — his readiness to make concessions. Hence his horror films, where you felt he was saying, OK, I like horror films but I'll let it go through. So you got these very warped scenarios that end up in "There is no God but Allah" and the Qur'an, although you knew that Mohamed's attitude to life was not exactly that. And all the horror and monstrous effects, both thematically and on the level of production, were toned down and did not develop, partly because production conditions did not allow it and partly because Al-Azhar would not condone it, and the censor would therefore ban it. And he just conceded himself in this movie genre. The way he related to horror films was similar to the way he related to the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, a B-movie horror musical, which was very campy — camp aesthetics, Frankenstein as a transvestite... very outrageous. You felt Mohamed's wish was to be able to express himself through camp, through genres... etc, but always he made concessions precisely when it came to expressing himself, because, I think, he never had a producer."

He did *mugawalaat* films, "contractors' films", which were very common in the 70s and 80s. The Saudis would say we need videos and here is a budget which they gave to a producer. This meant that you had to shoot the film in ten days, and with stars who were pre-assigned. So "con-

tractors' films" did not really have a producer. Most of Mohamed's feature films were contractors' films: *Tawiza* (Talisman), *Kabus* (Nightmare) and *Gharum wa Intiqam bil-Satour* (Love and Revenge with round on them, and I'm going to subvert it all, and pervert it all. And he got through that way."

I used to have fights about this with him, I used to tell

By Youssef Nasrallah

tend to be abiding by all the rules, then I'll turn the tables around on them, and I'm going to subvert it all, and pervert it all. And he got through that way."

There was no reason why he should stop making films, except that — and this was, I think, the fatal mistake, where you pay for the concessions you've made because you are so dependent on an industry which is unhealthy — when this kind of production fell and Saudi Arabia stopped funding *mugawalaat* films, many people stopped working. Those of them who managed to continue did so in TV, but they did not have this subversiveness and perversity of Mohamed's, which couldn't be accommodated on TV. Nor did he want to: cinema, though he earned a living by it, was for him primarily a pleasure, which would not have been fulfilled by TV films or serials."

So the second best thing he could do was documentaries. He did the documentary on Youssef Chahine, whom he loved very much, and it's quite good. It shows a profound knowledge of the films. You really feel Mohamed knew what he was talking about, knew what shots to pick out. And again this sense of enjoyment of cinema comes across incredibly. And he did video clips for singers. There is something which is very cinematic about MTV: you toy around with film, you toy around with music. And there were, of course, his radio programmes."

I dislike looking at Mohamed as simply a victim or a tragic figure — which he is in a sense. Professionally, I think, what was tragic about him was that he was potentially a very sophisticated and cultured filmmaker who thought the best way to make films was to abide totally by the rules of the market. But the market is warped, and warped to the extent that it is fake. There was, then, a big misunderstanding which, I think, lay behind his making no films for a period of five or six years. But I know he was working on something for the last two years. So although I dislike this image of him as a tragic figure, it is to some extent true. But then there is another image which will always be the one I keep of Mohamed — that of a very witty and very funny person, someone who was sharp-tongued and at the same time very kind-hearted. There was no evil in his wickedness."



L-r: Mohamed Shebl on location; in a memorable cameo appearance with Nahila Eheld in *Al-Raqsa Wal-Siyasi* (The Belly-dancer and the Politician)

him that this is crap, that he should give himself the possibility of going all the way. But in retrospect, today, it took guts to do what he did. He's somebody who went into the jungle and wanted to play the game according to the rules of the jungle, and at the same time express himself. He had to be crazy to do this and he was crazy. He toyed with a lot of things; and I suspect he had a lot of fun doing it. There are two kinds of temperaments at work in Mo-

lay behind his making no films for a period of five or six years. But I know he was working on something for the last two years. So although I dislike this image of him as a tragic figure, it is to some extent true. But then there is another image which will always be the one I keep of Mohamed — that of a very witty and very funny person, someone who was sharp-tongued and at the same time very kind-hearted. There was no evil in his wickedness."

A true consolation

By Nadia Lutfi

"I met Mohamed Shebl soon after he returned from Washington where he was second counselor in our embassy. He had made a choice: he opted out of a diplomatic career in favour of art and film directing. One of my best friends, director Ezzat Kamal, had said to me 'I'm going to introduce you to someone you'll like very much'. We took a felucca on the Nile. And I liked him immediately; he had such an innocent face. And then of course I discovered just how knowledgeable he was, though he was always very modest about his erudition. We became friends, and I grew intimate with his family."

I have no brothers or sisters, so I leaned on him. He was soft-hearted, noble and had this very Egyptian sense of humour and also a very Egyptian patience. And I drew on his extensive knowledge of art, of politics. I never worked with Mohamed, but starting from 1979 we would discuss all his projects, go through his scenarios together, as I used to do with Shadi Abdel-Salam. And after the shock of losing Shadi, Mohamed was a consolation, and a continuation. Shadi's death was a slap in the face — and now this."

He spent himself. He was a staunch, loyal son — to his mother, whom he had looked after since her paralysis, and to his friends. So he was like a candle that consumed itself. He became diabetic at a young age, but he didn't take after himself — all his energy was taken up elsewhere. The day he died I called him up in the morning, and I didn't understand that he was ill. I thought he was asleep, so I said I'd call back later. If he could have called anyone up, none of this would have happened."

The documentary film he had made about Youssef Chahine was screened this year at international film festivals. He was just starting to see his work bear fruit. Recognition was coming his way and he was reaching out to grasp it. It's as if you had a flower that was just starting to blossom, and someone came and broke it off. And it was such a fine flower."

"The film *Gharum wa Intiqam bil-Satour* (Love and Revenge with a Cleaver) was the first film which Mohamed and I actually completed together. But there were a great many other ideas and projects on which we had collaborated."

I first met Mohamed, almost 12 years ago, at Youssef's house; he was her friend. It took less than five minutes for us to become friends, simply because we were on the same wavelength. He was such an ironic character, such a smiling creature. We found that we spoke the same language, saw things from the same perspective. It was almost as if we had been friends since childhood."

I shared his dreams about many things, dreams that never came to fruition. It was in 1991 that we made *Gharum wa Intiqam bil-Satour* (Love and Revenge with a Cleaver). There were of course the usual production shortcomings — all the problems he faced which wore out his dreams, one after the other. Otherwise we laughed for hours on end. That's how he was, always laughing at his own problems, joking about all the drawbacks. He was such fun. And we went on with the

film: we had to shoot the movie, facing all the setbacks — he couldn't have any of the special effects he wanted. And I think this was the pattern throughout his career. He would write the screenplay with a certain vision and then, bit by bit, it would all be destroyed."

And yes, he was different from other directors. But he had to give up many of his demands and requirements. He had to make the concessions he made because he had gone through dire straits. To produce his first film, *Anyab* (Fangs), he had sold a very valuable plot of land for peanuts, because he had believed so strongly in the idea of the film. But then he ran into problems, even in the casting. His choice for the male lead was Adel Imam, but for certain reasons he couldn't get him. So he turned to Ahmed Adawiyya, who was not so important as to warrant the sacrifice of selling the land at that price. But then Mohamed was always an adventurer, and a bit suicidal. And despite his many talents and assets, he was a very shy person, so shy that often he would forgo his rights. His failing was that he made concessions. Yet, this is in

"My friendship with Mohamed goes back a long way, at least 15 years. Mohamed was involved in many things: in the field of cinema, in the music scene, in writing — he was multi-talented. He had an excellent video-library and through him we watched films we could never have seen otherwise. We'd sit around at his place, chatting and discussing all sorts of things. He was also very gourmet, and was a brilliant cook — which is something that impressed me very much about him. He loved Chinese and Far-Eastern food."

A strange thing happened after his funeral. I left with Ahmed Zaki and we were so depressed he suggested we go for a meal together. We found ourselves having lunch at a Chinese restaurant. I said, have you noticed what happened, it's as if he's still with us, one way or another."

This awful not knowing

By Isa'd Younis

the nature of the industry: the producers may well agree to your demands, but as soon as the camera starts rolling, they say you can't have this and you can't have that. So either you get on with it or you have to make a big fuss."

Aside from this he was a kind of cultural institution, and a very informed viewer. His knowledge was vast and spanned so many fields. And he was the best film critic I ever encountered. He was also an accomplished emcee, a radio announcer, a translator, and a very knowledgeable about all forms of Western music. Yet he did not know how to make a dream come true and it was this not knowing that made for the major problems in his life, and that may, perhaps, have killed him."

He had several projects for films lined up. One was to be a satire on well-known themes and scenes in Egyptian cinema. He also had the project of a sequel to *Tawiza* (Talisman) — *Tawiza II*. He had a project for a programme we were to film on Thursdays; he died on Tuesday or early Wednesday morning. He was very en-

thusiastic about this programme and had made all the necessary preparations for it. He had met the managers of the satellite channel sponsoring this programme and they were all totally enchanted by him, to the extent that the head of the network, who is based in Beirut and had met him only once, called me up in a terrible state. He said he wanted to take a plane here immediately. He couldn't believe that this man who was so full of life and knowledge and wit could just withdraw so easily."

But it seems to me that it was his long depression that made him withdraw. He had an overwhelming number of problems, problems it would have been very hard for anybody to endure. These, compounded by his long depression, were coupled with vulnerability; though he seemed quite tough he was actually very fragile."

One of the reasons for his depression was the collapse of the Egyptian film industry, which led him to pity not himself but the entire *metier*. And all this is apart from his private, personal problems."

Changing tack

By Ali Badrakhan

one more obstacle he faced. But because he loved cinema, he did documentaries; because he loved cinema, he worked in the TV; and because he loved cinema he did video clips — since all these things were related to the medium. He had a unique temperament, and was very much an individual. He had a world of his own, and his films were an attempt to share that world with others."

His father, late ambassador Fouad Shebl, was a very well-read man, and Mohamed took after him. He spoke several languages fluently and was widely cultured. I remember once when he dropped by on me he found a book on Confucius; he said: 'Let me have this. This was meant for me, not you.' I teach a seminar course at the Cinema In-

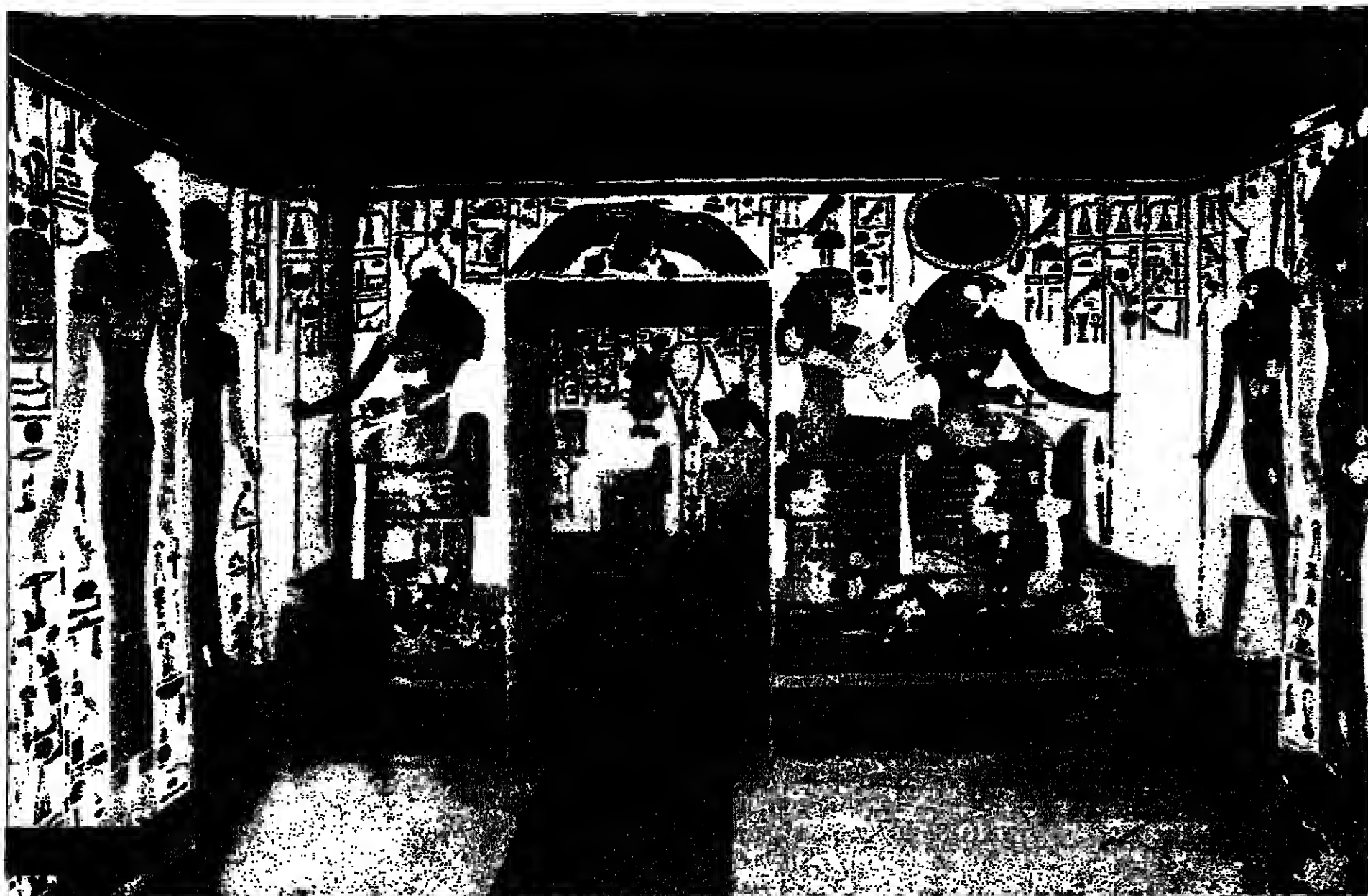
stitute and I always invite figures from the film world to come and speak to the students. One of

the people I was very keen on introducing to my students was Mohamed Shebl, and they truly loved him. He came and screened his documentary film *Tiba Tashaq Al-Mawi* (Thebes Worships Death). I remember the music he had chosen for the film was Japanese music. Given that we don't really know what Ancient Egyptian music was like, he opted for Japanese music to create an Oriental mood, and it was very effective."

One of the special things about him was that no matter how many problems and worries he had, when you got together with him, it was always fun and jokes and laughter. This came across, too, in his early morning radio programme. Listening to

him, I sometimes sensed that he was unhappy, but he invariably did his best to create a pleasant atmosphere, to bring joy to others. He was a beautiful person in himself. And he was vulnerable; he'd feel hurt when you didn't get in touch for a while, but once you met up, all would be forgotten. There was a streak of sarcasm in him, a sarcasm against life. But then most of the time he was the butt of his own sarcasm."

Last Saturday [three days after his death] he was supposed to film a programme for ART. The decor was all ready for filming. The news of his death was a terrible shock to me. I woke up early in the morning on Wednesday to the news of his death. At first I thought it was a bad joke. But it wasn't a joke. To me, it was the loss of a very fine friend."



Only Ancient Egyptians could keep their personality a secret. Graphology cannot be applied to this type of script

The writing on the wall

Non-verbal communication and graphology expert Fouad Attia claims that the study of an individual's handwriting allows him to penetrate this individual's inner-self. He spoke to **Fayza Hassan** about the increased use of graphology in many professional fields

In the old days, neat handwriting was one of the founding blocks on which sound education was built. Special notebooks were devised to help pupils "form" their letters, while writing lessons and exercises were an important part of the curriculum. Sloppy handwriting was an impediment to school progress and did not bode well for the future of the writer, teachers would assure, while young French pupils were quick to retort that "good handwriting is the science of asses," a popular French proverb probably hinting at the fact that fastidious writers lacked creativity.

Graphologists, however, claim that there is much more to handwriting than the lay person, or the school teacher, can detect. They can, they say, unveil all the secret traits of the writer's personality by analysing a sample of his/her handwriting — which, incidentally, would lend a degree of seriousness to both proverb and teachers' predictions indicating that handwriting does indeed allow certain insights into the writer's nature.

Although graphology is still described as a pseudo science, there is evidence that many of its findings are true. It is well known for instance that handwriting will change in old age, during an illness or under stress. It does give away mental illness, sometimes before other signs have become apparent.

Psychologists — and in particular the famous French psychologist Alfred Binet — have been interested in graphology for a long time. Binet's studies showed that graphologists' findings have been correct in over 60 per cent of cases he examined. In Europe, and increasingly in the US now, as non-verbal communications and graphology expert Fouad Attia explains, large firms tend to rely on a study of the handwriting of applicants before appointing personnel to key positions. Graphology is studied in several universities in Germany, Switzerland and Holland as a valid branch of psychology and is used in studies on behaviour modification. "If handwriting indicates some traits of the personality," says Attia, "it follows that by changing the handwriting of an individual one can alter his/her personality."

ly... He'd read three books on the ins and outs of handwriting analysis." According to Attia, the movement of handwriting across the page is as clear to the graphologist as ordinary body language is to the lay person. "I can tell if a person is hard-working, well-organised, disciplined, generous, gregarious and many other things as well from just looking at a sample of his/her handwriting. As if one is to search for Freudian connotations, to the superego (conscience), ego (self-image and relation to reality), and id (unconscious passions). The graphologist will examine the relative size and form of the three zones to be able to tell if the writer is more spiritual, intellectual, emotional, sensual or materialistic and where his/her internal conflicts lie. It is said that badly formed middle zone letters betray a poor self-image, while sharp pointed loops can indicate a tendency to sexual tyranny.

So far graphology, has been a thing with which the West has toyed but was made little use of in Third World countries. According to Attia, however, things are rapidly changing and, while Europe and America are more and more using it in their professional and private lives, the same methods are now being applied with equally satisfactory results to the Arabic script. "The only script which graphology cannot crack is hieroglyphs, because each symbol had precise measurements that had to be followed exactly," says Attia. "If you look at the Ancient Egyptians' script, you will notice that each symbol is reproduced with not the slightest variation every time. Take the bird, for instance: not one is taller or fatter than the other. This script was based on the rigorous reproduction of every symbol and therefore individual differences between scribes are not detectable. Modern script, on the other hand, allows for much more freedom in the reproduction of the letters."

Attia thinks that in a few years, Egypt will catch up with Europe and the US in its use of handwriting analysis in most professional fields. Is not the use of the typed script a hindrance to the progress of graphology? Attia does not think so. "All it takes is a signature," he says.

Attia's handwriting analysis is based on three zones: the body of the letters represents the middle zone and the upper and lower zones are formed by the extensions of letters like f, k, g, y and the capitals.

Felix Klein, considered the father of American graphology, regards the three zones as corresponding to the head, heart and lower body or, a shatter of fact his/her signature usually suffices." Attia, who is employed by several foreign firms in Egypt to assist in personnel selection, also advises these firms on more harmonious combinations of personnel.

In other words, without laying eyes on them, he can tell which employees will work better together to achieve maximum efficiency, which are more likely to become leaders, and which will be content merely to follow.

Handwriting is divided by graphologists into three zones: the body of the letters represents the middle zone and the upper and lower zones are formed by the extensions of letters like f, k, g, y and the capitals.

Felix Klein, considered the father of American graphology, regards the three zones as corresponding to the head, heart and lower body or,

and chips, and is supplemented by a second menu including more substantial items. It is full of little jokes, puns on the name of the establishment, with sections called dealer's choice etc.

And then my eyes fell on it — the item on the menu that somehow seemed a distillation of the whole place. It was a burger, but not just an ordinary burger. It was a burger *au poivre*. And I couldn't resist. Nor could the person opposite me. The waiter came, the two *au poivre* were duly ordered and for the sake of form I added a prawn salad, in Deal's own "special" dressing.

The latter arrived, and was really rather good. The special dressing was heavy on dill and lemon, indeed comprised little else, but it was refreshing and the ingredients, onion, peppers and prawns, were all fresh. And then came what we had both been waiting for — the burger *au poivre*.

There was something oddly familiar about the taste, though for a time I could not place it. And then I remembered. School — Tuesday, every Tuesday for a decade, and lunch — curry made with one of those yellow, proprietary powders. And that was it. The burger was not only *au poivre*, it was also curried, after a fashion. Around the edge of the plate was a neat row of French fries, in the centre a tiny dish with ketchup, and the whole ensemble was garnished with half an orange cut in the shape of a water lily.

This is sponge food — food to soak things up. As such it is rather good. It is also inexpensive, and service is extremely efficient. The bill, with two local beers, came to less than LE70 for two.

Deals, Ahmed Sabri Street, Zamalek.

Restaurant review

Size isn't everything

Nigel Ryan remembers a decade of lunches

Once upon a time — first on the pages of the glossies, and then in deepest suburbia — decorative paintwork was all the rage. There were stippled walls, rag rolled walls, marbled pillars, cracked egg shell textures. They are still with us, more or less, a kind of off the peg interior design, usually done in pastel shades, in tasteful colours that are supposedly understated but which in reality scream middle-of-the-road.

At Deals, a relatively new operation in Zamalek, which occupies the tiny premises of a former Japanese restaurant, decorative paintwork is all the rage. That, and marbled columns, one neatly broken, and crazy paving, and wooden framed mirrors about a traditional wooden bar, and black and white stills from classic movies — moody pouts and smouldering glances — and tall stools at tall tables.

To cram so much into such a tiny space is ambitious. But then the customers seem more than happy to squeeze themselves in as well. And then there are the two televisions showing videos, the regulars crowded at the bar, the tables left empty for those bright young things who had the foresight to reserve, and several waiters to service this incredibly cramped space.

It is an odd recipe but one which appears to be popular. A little schizophrenic, perhaps, but then the customers themselves struck me as a little odd. This is a bar, basically, that serves food. Yet when I was there several tables appeared to order no food and little else apart from sporadic bottles of Coca-Cola with the consequence that the entire experience feels like being in a drinking club without the liquor.

The menu runs the gamut of basic mezze, expands to include things like "traditional" fish

Sufra Dayma

Okra in green soup

Ingredients:

- 1 kg. fresh okra
- 1 1/2 litres poultry or meat stock
- 1 bunch chard leaves
- 2 bunches green coriander leaves
- 2 garlic heads
- 1 tsp. crushed garlic
- 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 tsp. butter ghee
- Salt

Method:

Wash the okra and leave it to dry in a strainer before peeling it the usual way. In the meantime, wash the chard and coriander leaves and strain them from water. Peel the garlic cloves and leave them whole. In a saucepan, melt the butter ghee then add the chard, coriander and the garlic (whole). Leave them to fry over medium heat, stirring them every now and then until they become dry and crunchy. Beat them in an electric blender to form a paste-like blend, and leave it aside. In a cooking pan bring the stock to boil, then add the okra and the crushed garlic. Cover and leave to cook over low heat. After the okra becomes tender and cooked, add the lemon juice and the salt, then add the chard and coriander blend, stir it in well, then cover and leave to boil with the okra and stock only for a couple of minutes. Upon serving, you can add fresh lemon juice for each helping. Serve with rice and poultry or meat.

Moushira Abdel-Malek



The year of the crocodile

"What shall I get you from Egypt?" I asked my American grandson on the phone before I left to visit my daughter and her children in Florida. "A crocodile," he said promptly. "You should spank your daughter for teaching her children that there are crocodiles on sale in Egypt," said my friend. On the other hand thought that I could do no less than grant him his wish. I therefore embarked on a crocodile hunt.

Kham El-Khalili, the most obvious place, did not seem to stock them, and I went around town for a while trying to imagine who would readily trade in what was after all a popular symbol of the Nile. I was not going to go all the way to Florida to inform a seven-year-old that he had the wrong notion about our fauna. Little did I know that this was going to be the year of the crocodile and that before my trip was over my life would be filled with varieties of them.

Armed with a stone replica of the reptile — finally located in a pseudo-antique shop — I landed at Kennedy Airport where my first American crocodile was waiting, disguised as the immigration officer on duty. He showed me all his teeth — surely more than 32 — while informing me that the form I was handing him was unacceptable. It was written in pencil, a tool they have kept under glass in a museum since IBM and co. had taken over their lives. I on the other hand did not even have a pen. Surprise at my confession did not show in his eyes but rather around his gills. He pointed in the general direction of a long counter on the other side of the hall. There were many pens and stacks of forms placed there — for people like me no doubt, who had trouble adjusting to the age of virtual reality.

None of the pens worked. I hurried back to share this bit of information with the crocodile. The teeth withdrew at once. I had obviously annoyed him, the Third World scoring an unexpected point. He grabbed the form and retraced my handwriting with his own pen.

"Where are you staying," he snapped. "With my daughter," I snapped back. I knew I should have had the exact address but somehow I had forgotten to ask. "She will be waiting for me at the airport," I volunteered trying to sound like a dainty lady crocodile. It involves a great show of teeth. He was not impressed and was not going to let me get away with what he told me sternly was unpardonable negligence. He had a good mind to send me back, he said. I did not really believe he would but I thought it prudent to exhibit due concern.

We competed for a while in the dental work department until he gave in. "Write Blue Lagoon Inn," he said finally extending his own pen. "Is there such an inn?" I asked bating my eyelashes in what I consider a most appealing way. After all I have better eyes than teeth. "Why do you care," he said brusquely. "You are staying with your daughter, remember." His teeth were out again in a most menacing parody of a smile. I thought it wiser not to push my luck.

On arrival at the airport, my daughter and grandchildren were there. So was a huge crocodile, the real thing this time looking immensely bored in his aquarium near the exit. My grandson couldn't wait to show it to me. I cannot say I cared much for it at first but it turned out to be a boon when we discovered that one piece of luggage was missing. It kept the children mesmerised for as long as it took us to give up the search, fill in a form and hope for the best. That piece of luggage contained my grandson's crocodile, the one it took me so long to find.

"Don't worry," said my daughter. "This is America. They'll find it. Otherwise they will have to replace it." I thought of the crocodile. It had looked properly parched, like an Ancient Egyptian reptile should look. Could one find a similar beast here? I needn't have worried. As soon as we arrived home my grandson took me to his room. The largest — and ugliest — collection of reptiles was installed on the premises. Some dangled from a box, others from an open drawer. His bedside table was covered with a small worm like variety. He had stuck some on the wall next to his bed and many on the ceiling. They were in every shape colour and size one could wish — or not wish — for. The plastic industry was doing fine and was making good use of recent advances in technology.

Some of his reptiles glowed while others emitted an intermittent luminous signal. Some were almost purple and others a sick green. One or two strangely, were given to rattling.

"Why did you want another crocodile, when you already have so many?" I wanted to know. "Because they are all different," he said stating the obvious. "They are like people, only nicer." I wondered what kind of company the poor boy was keeping but the next day I realised that all the shops were displaying reptiles. It was a kind of celebration aimed at teaching children to love them — and buy them.

They were being taught what reptiles are, how many species there were and where they could be found, how one should protect them and a lot of other things besides. We bought a little turtle and placed it in an aquarium at home. My grandson stood on a stool in the kitchen to slice cucumbers, lettuce and banana for the creature. "Could we buy a small live crocodile tomorrow grandson?" he asked sweetly. I toyed with the idea. A woman in Cairo had once kept a small crocodile in her bathtub. It had met a tragic end when the hot water tap had been turned on by mistake. I doubted that my daughter would appreciate such a visitor in her bathroom.

Later, to my utter surprise, my suitcase turned up intact on our doorstep and I was able to give my grandson his Egyptian crocodile. "This one will keep forever," he said with satisfaction. "It is not plastic." Watching his happiness, I found myself totally reconciled with crocodiles. Why, I was beginning to like them. That one at Kennedy Airport, I now remembered, even had a sense of humour.

The next day at the Bush Gardens I was about to lean over a fence and pat what looked exactly like a larger-than-life replica of my Egyptian crocodile when my grandson pulled me firmly back. "Don't grandma, this one can bite." I smiled. "He is obviously made of plastic," I said. "American crocodiles are harmless." At this precise moment the beast stirred slightly and winked in agreement.

Fayza Hassan

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

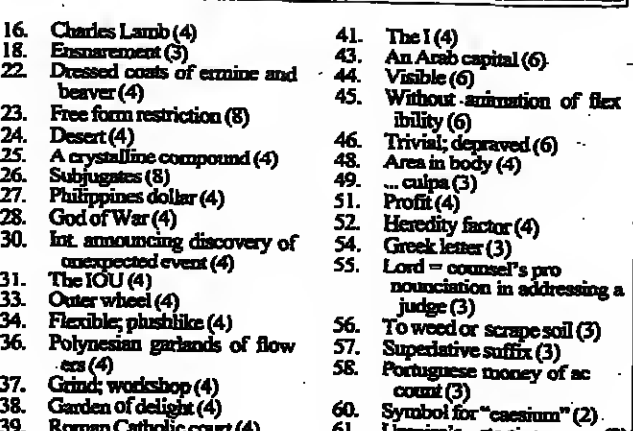
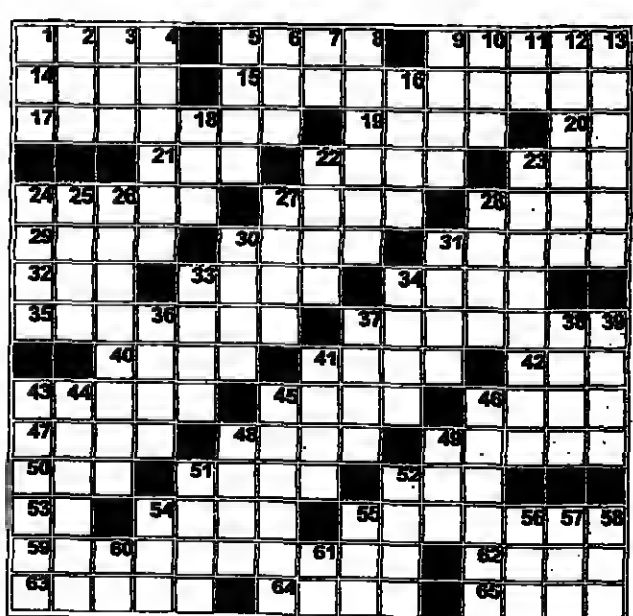
ACROSS

1. Hasty kiss (4)
2. Polygraph (5)
3. In imitation of, later (5)
4. European river (4)
5. Branding state of skin produced by fright (10)
6. Ecstasy (7)
7. Material of bricks, pottery, etc. (4)
8. Symbol for "selenium" (2)
9. Through (3)
10. Not dark; complimentary; moderate quality (4)
11. ... Moines (3)
12. Majestic woman (5)
13. Insect stage of development (4)
14. List of dishes (4)
15. Sequence of animal or plant communities (4)
16. Defies (5)
17. Phrasal of "y" (3)
18. Hurl (4)
19. Wheys (4)
20. Humankind's cry to hounds, hyph. wds (7)
21. Ganger (7)
22. Canth, from "air" (4)
23. Separate with sieve (4)
24. Marital vows, 2 wds (32)
25. Film (5)
26. Leather shoe-edging (4)
27. Ballad-monger (4)
28. Experts (4)
29. Sprawl (4)
30. Miscellaneous food supplied to Israelites in wilderness (5)
31. Greek letter, pl. (3)
32. Simpleton; mistake (4)
33. Semi-solid colloidal substance (5)
34. Mr. Pacino (2)
35. Invasion (4)
36. To thrash (7)
37. Type of cannon delivering continuous fire, hyph. wds. (10)
38. Mrs. Kennedy Sr. (4)
39. Pyromania (5)
40. Knob on plant (4)
41. The abominable snowman (4)

DOWN

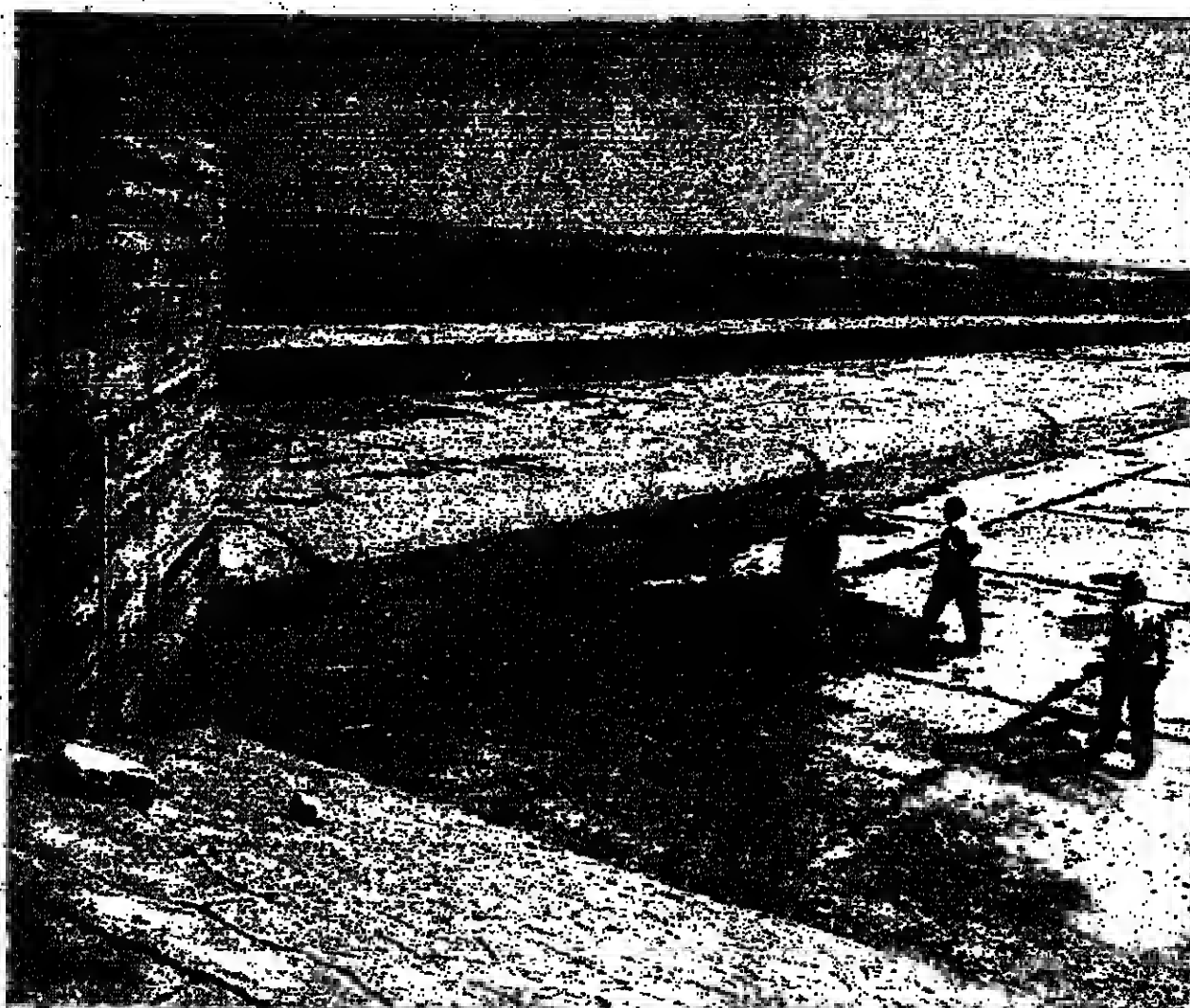
1. Travel on foot, stuff (3)
2. Vigil (3)
3. Depression in mountain-chain (3)
4. A culinary item, pl. (6)
5. Burach (4)
6. Cauldron; dope (3)
7. Therefore (2)
8. Break away (6)
9. Distast (4)
10. Glide (3)
11. Musical note (2)
12. Ascent Hebrew (6)
13. Indian monkey (6)
14. Charles Lamb (4)
15. Enamoured (3)
16. Dressed coats of ermine and beaver (4)
17. Free farm restriction (8)
18. Desert (4)
19. A crystalline compound (4)
20. Subjugates (9)
21. Philippines dollar (4)
22. God of War (4)
23. Int. announcing discovery of unexpected event (4)
24. The IOU (4)
25. Outer wheel (4)
26. Flexible plumbline (4)
27. Polynesian gardens of flow-ers (4)
28. Gink; workshop (4)
29. Garden of delight (4)
30. Roman Catholic court (4)
31. The (4)
32. An Arab capital (6)
33. Visible (6)
34. Without animation of flexibility (6)
35. Trivial; degraded (6)
36. Area in body (4)
37. ... culpa (3)
38. Profile (4)
39. Headly factor (4)
40. Greek letter (3)
41. Lord = counsellor's pronouncement in addressing a judge (3)
42. To weed or scrape soil (3)
43. Superlative suffix (3)
44. Portuguese money of account (3)
45. Symbol for "caesium" (2)
46. Umpire's starting cry (2)

Last week's solution

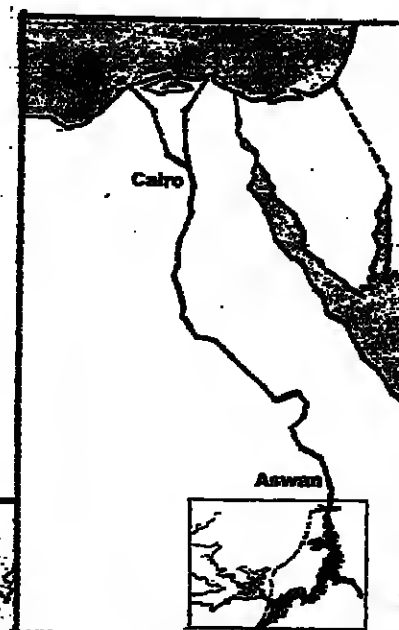


فكنا من الأصل

The Nile's most abundant flood in a 100 years is to be celebrated on Thursday with President Mubarak attending as the Nile waters flow through the Toshki spill-way, 280km south of the Aswan High Dam. Dina Ezzat, reporting on government plans, remembers the building of the dam which this year saved the Nile valley from devastation

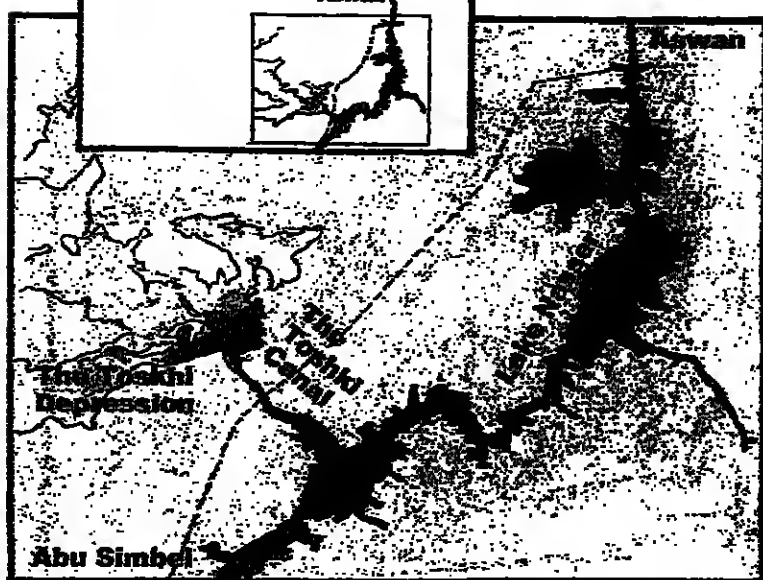


The Toshki spill-way photographed while still dry



'Nobody can take the risk of making the High Dam cope with even one centimetre more than the permitted 182 metres, because this would mean subjecting the body of the dam to [a weight that could produce] serious cracks.'

Mina Iskandar



Toshki: the safety valve

Since it was constructed over a decade ago, not a drop of water has run in the Toshki spillway. But its image as a dry canal may change over the next few days when the High Dam Authority channels this year's excess Nile floodwater into it. The event will be celebrated by festivities attended by President Hosni Mubarak and high-ranking state officials, announced Abdel-Hadi Radi, minister of irrigation and water resources.

The 22km-long canal, which links Lake Nasser to the Toshki depression in the Western Desert, was built in the early 1980s — 10 years after the High Dam came into full operation — to drain off excess water flowing into the lake from the River Nile. It is designed to be used when the water stored behind the High Dam reaches a height of over 178 metres above sea level.

This week, for the first time since the spillway was built, the mark was passed. "These are safety

limits that we cannot go beyond," said Mina Iskandar, chairman of the High Dam Authority.

In theory, the High Dam can cope with the lake rising to 182 metres above sea level. But, according to Iskandar, "we cannot just leave the water to reach the maximum level. What would happen if we allowed the water to reach the maximum level and all of a sudden the country was hit by winter floods? What would I do then?" he asked. "We have to leave space for unexpected floods."

Preparations are well under way to inaugurate the spillway and start a number of agricultural projects which will put the excess 120 billion cubic metres of water in Lake Nasser to good use. But as excitement about the plans has built up, criticism has been levelled at the spillway's effectiveness.

One major concern is the high evaporation rates which will affect both the canal and the Toshki depression. Critics argue that this will minimise the

possibility of making good use of this water. Another concern is the feasibility of depending on a once-in-a-lifetime high flood to launch a series of agricultural projects.

Regardless of such debate, said Iskandar, each one-centimetre rise in the water level behind the High Dam means an extra 59 million cubic metres, or 59 million tons, of water. "Nobody can take the risk of making the High Dam cope with even one centimetre more than the permitted 182 metres, because this would mean subjecting the body of the dam to [a weight that could produce] serious cracks," he explained.

The High Dam is seen "as part of the national heritage. It is even a part of our national legacy," Iskandar said. "In the end it is a structure and has to be dealt with as such."

Before building the Toshki spillway, the High Dam Authority decreed that the maximum height of

water behind the dam should be 175 metres above sea level. "Any excess water used to be allowed to flow into the Nile to make sure that there was room for extra water in emergencies. It is Toshki that is allowing us to go up to 178 metres," Iskandar said.

According to the chairman of the High Dam Authority, now orchestrating the build-up to the spillway's inauguration, the evaporation theory does not hold water. "If I was to leave the floodwater in Lake Nasser, it would still evaporate. Maybe the rates would differ, but if the safety of the High Dam is at stake, chances cannot be taken," he said.

Political concerns have also been raised by critics who warn that projecting Egypt as a nation with a large water surplus will only make it more difficult for the country to win a favourable deal in any future negotiations with riparian states on the distribution of water resources.

"Egypt's rights to water resources are well es-

tablished and nobody can come and suggest that we should renegotiate those rights," Iskandar said. "People need to realise that a big excess of floodwater, which is unlikely to re-occur in the next 100 years, is not going to change Egypt's positions in any water negotiations."

According to the 1959 agreement on the distribution of water resources between the countries of the Nile basin, Egypt's annual share is 55.5 billion cubic metres, while Sudan's is 18.5 billion cubic metres. "We built the High Dam to protect our rights to water resources," Iskandar stressed. "Toshki is one of the complementary projects that assist in improving the performance of the dam."

The ministries of irrigation and agriculture are currently reviewing their studies to make the best possible use out of the water which will cover the 2,000 feddan surface area of the spillway.

'Symbol of your will'

It is 9 January 1960. Thousands of people, standing before the site of the Aswan High Dam, are holding their breath as their eyes follow the hands of Gamal Abdel-Nasser pressing a lever that would detonate 10 tons of dynamite to explode the granite mountains of Aswan and formally start the construction of the High Dam.

Today, as the High Dam blocks the way of the high flood waters from sweeping over the Nile Valley and stores it in a huge lake or channels it through the Toshki spillway, to the New Valley, memories of the national struggle to build this gigantic project flood the mind.

It was at the turn of this century that a group of engineers first came up with the idea of building a dam at Aswan to stop high floods from destroying entire villages and planted fields. Engineers also conceived that the dam would create massive water reservoirs for use in the case of low floods.

The dam project was shelved for decades until the 1952 Revolution, when the new government sought to build a society supported by expanded agriculture and industry. To increase the amount of arable land, the construction of the dam was then considered again.

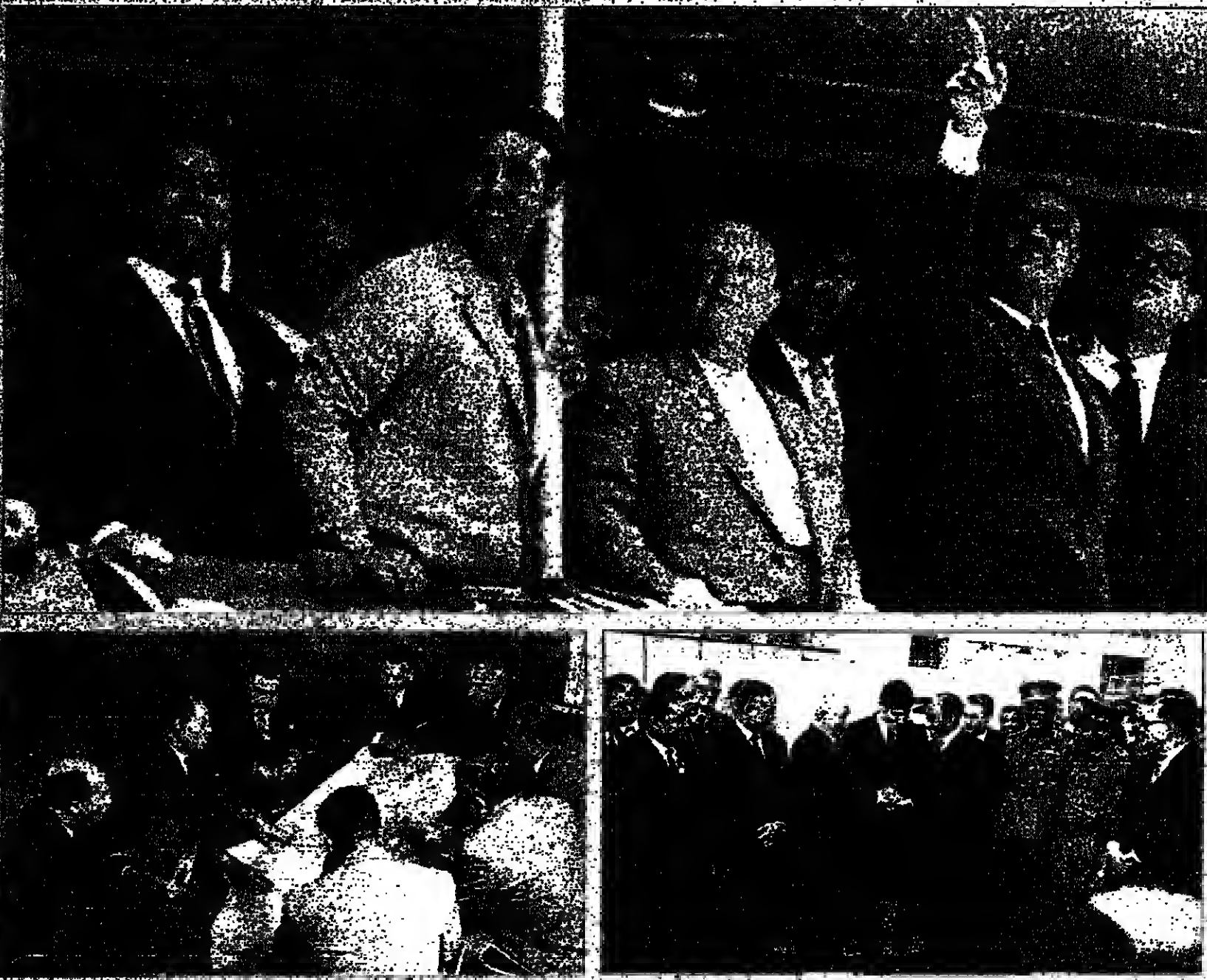
"The building of the High Dam and the accompanying electricity generating station in Aswan testifies to the great success of the Egyptian people," read the certificate of the completion of the High Dam. "It is evidence of the people's determination to pursue the road to social and economic development and independence; a road laid down by Egypt's son, the unforgettable leader Gamal Abdel-Nasser."

After its completion in 1971, the Aswan High Dam increased the cropping pattern on 5.4 million of Egypt's arable land, brought 973,000 feddans under perennial irrigation and provided water that could potentially irrigate 1.3 million feddans of new land. It also dammed one of the world's largest reservoirs, Lake Nasser, spanning over 5,000 square kilometres.

But, in the minds of many Egyptians, the main achievement of the High Dam was bringing electricity to thousands of villages and towns that would have otherwise still been living in pitch darkness.

In short, says Mina Iskandar, head of the High Dam Organisation, "The High Dam meant a new life. People who did not live during the days before the construction of the dam could not imagine what it was like. Crops, cattle, and houses used to be completely buried under water in times of high floods. There were towns in Cairo that had no electricity," he recalled.

Every year, the High Dam saves around \$6 million that otherwise would have been wasted in damage, repair work and relief operations. But the road to building the dam was long and arduous.



High Dam reviews plans (left); said Nasser, accompanied by Nasser's son Khaled, inaugurates the dam in 1971

In the mid-1950s, Egypt requested aid for the dam project from the United States, Britain, and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development — where the US and Britain had the final say — to raise the \$1.5 billion needed. The Western powers initially promised to help but later reneged on their pledge.

Responding to this insult, in 1956, President Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal to initiate fund-raising for the project that some historians would say was only second to his dream of uniting the Arab world. As a result of Nasser's decision, Egypt had to fight a war against the tripartite aggression of Israel, Britain and France.

"It was clear to us why we had to fight this battle," said Amina Shafiq, a senior journalist who covered the oews of the canal nationalisation and the tripartite aggression. "We knew we wanted to build the High Dam. It meant a lot to us and we had to fight for it," she added.

The former Soviet Union agreed to contribute funds and expertise for the dam project, which former Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev described as the "eighth wonder" of the world.

The High Dam consists of a rock-fill body and a grout curtain in its middle. It is 17 times bigger than the Great Pyramid. On the eastern side of the dam there is a channel that controls the flow

of water.

After the dam's inauguration by Nasser in 1970, Egyptians celebrated the occasion. The streets of Aswan "could barely be seen as thousands of people took to the streets. They were waving flags and shouting slogans [supporting Nasser]," writes journalist Ragab Mahmoud in his recently published book: *The Saga of the High Dam. The story of men who conquered the mountain and the river.*

Printed by Al-Ahram Publishing House, the book, in 14 sections, tells the history and the story of the building of the dam. According to the author, the dam idea took shape in October 1938,

when agriculturist Mohamed El-Sayed Ayoub presented the government with his project.

A reader's memory is refreshed by episodes of the diversion of the Nile water in 1964, the UNESCO led salvage campaign of Egypt's Pharaonic temples, the collective eviction of some 50,000 Nubians from their villages that were later flooded by the dam's backwaters.

Mahmoud also weighs the opposition to the dam in his book. He acknowledges that the dam prevents the flow of silt carried by the flood. Silt is needed to nourish the agriculture zone and to prevent the erosion of the Nile Delta by the waters of the Mediterranean.

"The dam stopped the build-up of the Delta," charged prominent environmentalist Abdel-Fattah El-Qasas. "It thus allowed the erosion of the shores to go unabated and it was only when the Ras El-Bar chalets and lighthouse tumbled down that the government started to take the matter seriously and adopt anti-sea protection measures," he added. These included the building of dykes at the banks of the river and the pioneering of modern agriculture methods to make up for the lack of natural fertilisers in agrarian land.

But Mahmoud's book concludes that the positive aspects of the dam far outweigh its negative consequences.

"Projects as big as the High Dam are always controversial. There are always different schools of engineering, but I can promise that the High Dam was one of Egypt's greatest achievements," Iskandar said.

For many anthropologists the real irreparable damage done by the construction of the High Dam is the dislocation of entire Nubian communities that had to be removed from their original habitat, on which the dam was built, to newly-built communities in nearby governorates.

"I hear so many stories about old Nubia from my mother. She makes it sound like a dream: she talks about beautiful housing, loving neighbours and a self-sufficient community," said Mohamed Bakr, a Nubian civil servant now living in Cairo.

What remains most irrefutable is the political significance of building the High Dam. It is widely agreed that when Nasser insisted on going ahead with the massive project, he had his eye on the country's national pride as much as its struggle for development. This point is driven home in one speech the former president gave as the course of the Nile water was forever diverted in 1964. Addressing thousands of people chanting his name, Nasser said: "Men, women and children of Egypt, here, before the entire world is a symbol of your will, perseverance, and dedication to work and sacrifice. This High Dam is a memorial of your victory..."

The restoration dilemma

The views and approaches of restorers and researchers in the preservation of cultural heritage are frequently in conflict, as Dr K C Innemee of the Netherlands Institute of Archaeology in Cairo explains

As both an art-historian and archaeologist, I was trained to approach objects of material culture from the point of view of the researcher. Research, in its most innocent form, means observation without intervention. Frequently, however, research is a synonym for analysis, dissection or destruction. Like an anatomist who performs an autopsy on a corpse in order to discover the cause of death, the archaeologist destroys in order to learn. This destruction applies not only to the objects or architectural features that are found during an excavation, but also to the stratigraphy. An intact sequence of archaeological strata can be excavated only once. To remove it without proper documentation is an act of useless destruction.

I would like to present a case-study in which a restorer works side by side with an art-historian/archaeologist to achieve the best results. At the Church of the Virgin (El-Adra) in El-Surian Monastery in Wadi Natrun, a fire in 1988 destroyed a mural of the Ascension of Christ in the western half-dome. A hole in the outer plaster revealed a fragment of a bearded face, confirming something that had long been suspected - there was another mural underneath.

In 1991, a dilemma arose when large parts of the outer mural were on the point of collapse. A decision had to be taken on whether to remove it completely and reveal the older painting beneath - an intriguing possibility - or simply to restore it.

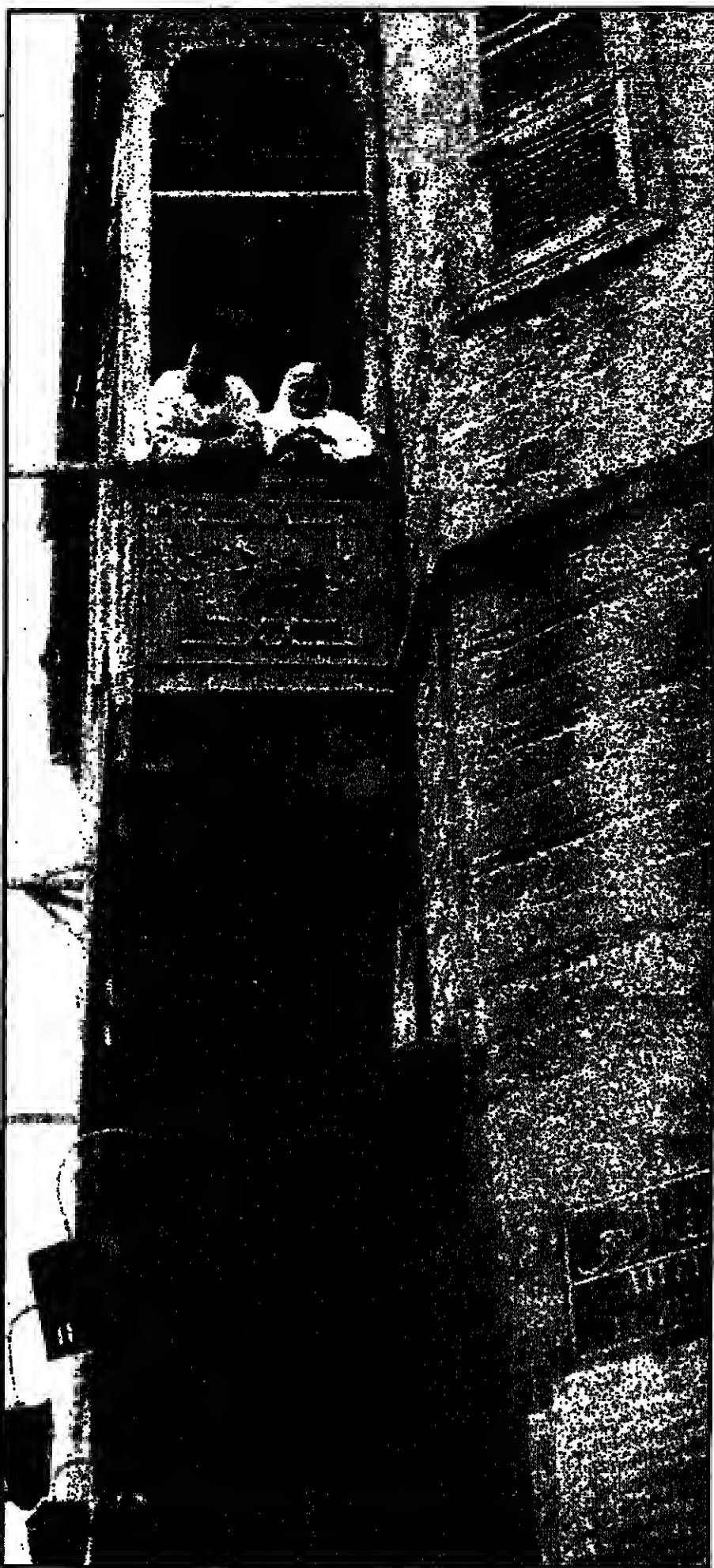
That was only one side of the dilemma. Another was that the two other half-domes of the church also had evidence that counterparts of the Annunciation-painting were present under the 13th century painting. Where a piece of plaster had fallen off, we could clearly see a small fragment of an earlier painting. Since the later addition was in a damaged state, it was tempting to remove it.

What are the arguments for preserving a relatively new painting, or attempting to separate the layers? Reasoning from the view of the researcher, we should take off the outer painting. From the point of view of conservation we might rather decide to leave it in place. Then there is a third argument: the church is a functional building and from the point of view of aesthetics it might be preferable to maintain a certain consistency in the interior decoration rather than expose a patchwork of paintings from different periods.

In fact, we were confronted with three different approaches to the same problem: The researcher/archaeologist wanted to extract information from the stratigraphy and would continue where the restorer would stop; the restorer, who, in the most puritan case would only preserve the present situation without removing layers of plaster, but would try to preserve after the researcher finished; and last, but not least, the users of the building, in this case the monks, who would like to see their church restored to a former state of beauty, even if this means that layers have to be separated and missing pieces reconstructed.

In the case of El-Surian Monastery, the Coptic community would like to see reconstruction of the original Coptic paintings that existed before Syrian monks inhabited the monastery and redecorated the church. All three points of view have individual merit and logic.

In September 1995 the Supreme Council of Antiquities gave a small Dutch-Polish team permission to consolidate the fragments of the dome, and remove parts of the unpainted plaster in several places in order to detect the existence of paintings underneath. Removing a layer of unpainted plaster is, strictly speaking, an act of destruction that can only be justified if it helps to prevent worse destruction. In this case, the survival of the covered paintings is threatened because they are invisible, hidden beneath the plaster. Each nail in the wall will invisibly damage them. Just like excavations through layers of sand and earth, before removing a layer of plaster it should be properly documented, no matter how minimal its value may appear. Documenting, therefore, is what we are in the process of doing. The opening of a few 'windows' in the plaster have already gained us a wealth of information concerning the history of the church and its decoration. One fragment of a Syriac text, uncovered under several layers of plaster, mentioned events and works in the church completed in the year 992AD. The only question now is - how far should we go?



Family in residence in restored medieval house

Life Prolonged

A momentous project by architect professors of Al Azhar University to document and restore old Islamic houses in Cairo has already begun. Sherine Nasr investigates

Beit Sukkar (Sukkar's house) is one of many 19th century houses in Old Cairo which are living models of Islamic architecture. This one, however, is much luckier than most. Its inhabitants, together with Al-Azhar University and the Goethe Institute, managed to restore it, thereby prolonging its life span for perhaps another hundred years.

Two years ago Salah Zaki, head of the Architectural Department at Al-Azhar University, launched a campaign to document and register old Islamic-style houses around the Citadel. "This area abounds in houses which are a hundred years old or more. They are not registered as monuments, but are examples of typical Islamic architecture and deserve care," Zaki said.

Beit Sukkar is named after the grandfather of the present inhabitants. It is a two-storey structure surrounding a large courtyard. The facade is decorated with an eight-metre-high mashrabiya (wood lattice-work) extending along the balconies. "Both the mashrabiya and the stained-glass are of exquisite workmanship," said Zaki.

It was Zaki, supported by a group of post-graduates at the Faculty of Engineering, who decided to include restoration along with documentation of the old buildings. "It was not enough to register old Islamic monuments, without providing a solution for the miserable conditions these houses are in," Zaki said. "Since the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) does not have sufficient funds to restore every single house in Old Cairo, we felt it our duty to provide technical assistance free." These houses constitute a treasure of Islamic architectural styles which will ultimately disappear if not restored, meaning a serious loss for historical Cairo.

Before work could commence, funding and permission from the residents of the house had to be obtained. The Goethe Institute, inspired by the ambitious idea, granted a sum of LE6,000 and the owner of the house was fortunately willing to co-operate. Once a supervisor of the old manuscripts library in Dar El-Kutub, Adel-Qadir Sukkar had acquired a taste for antiquity.

"I have gained an awareness of the importance of the nation's heritage and the dire need to protect it," he

said, "I have always known the value of my house but there was nothing I alone could do to save it." In an attempt to facilitate the task of the volunteer architects, Sukkar managed to persuade the other inhabitants of the building to agree to the rather unconventional plan. "They were afraid at first that they might lose the house, but I managed to convince them that the project aimed to protect it for them," he said. They later became more enthusiastic and collected 3,000 pounds for the project.

Before restoration, the house was deteriorating due to an extremely old sewage system and subterranean water. "The leaking water made the walls damp," said Sukkar.

A new sewage system was installed and the walls were supported. "The appearance is completely different now," said Sukkar. The house, which is already 110 years old, should survive for another century, Zaki believes that the "participation of the users" was a healthy sign. "This will inspire the inhabitants to preserve and maintain what has been restored," he said.

The restoration of the mashrabiya and the other woodwork will start soon. "The mashrabiya is of wonderful craftsmanship," said Sukkar, who believes that once fully restored, it will add significantly to the beauty of the structure. "Even before restoration, tourists often stopped to gaze at my house. Some even asked to view the inside. Now they have all the more reason to do so," he said. The whole project was finished in a record four months. "The effort exerted and the money spent cannot compare to the great value of these houses," Zaki commented.

Two neighbouring houses, El-Hassan's and El-Ghandour's, are the Al-Azhar team's next project. "These have already been documented and we will begin restoration soon," Zaki said.

They both feature similar Islamic architectural features: beautiful mashrabiyas that cover the entire facade and small balconies with Islamic decoration. "With outside co-operation, we hope to be able to preserve different generations of the nation's Islamic history," he said.

A credo for travellers

Delegates attending World Tourism Day agreed that tourism cannot flourish without global peace and stability. Rehab Saad reports

International attendees of World Tourism Day, held in Cairo on 26 September, adopted the motto, "Tourism: a factor of tolerance and peace," to express their conviction that tourism cannot flourish without global peace and stability.

"Tourism promotes cultural interaction and, therefore, better understanding between nations. This leads to tolerance and consequently to peace," said Mamdouh El-Beltagi, Egypt's minister of tourism.

Since the early 1980s, peace has been a major concern of the world tourism industry. At the Manila International Tourist Conference in 1980 the principle of "international tourism as an effective power to attain international peace" was born. This was reiterated in Canada in October 1988 at a conference entitled, "Tourism is a drive for peace." Delegates at this conference issued a charter, which expounds, "the credo of the peaceful traveller."

This ideology encourages people to travel the world in a spirit of peace, with an open mind and tolerant attitude, accepting and respecting cultural differences and respecting the environment.

"Tourism also improves international relations," said Salah Abdel-Wahab, head of the Egyptian Society of Scientific Tourist Experts. "For example, the establishment of a foreign hotel in a developing nation necessitates on-going cooperation between the government and foreign private-sector investors," he said, adding that tourist development also improves human relations, due to the continuous contact between the company's local hire and its employees all over the world.

International tourism is a thriving industry. The number of tourists around the world in 1995 reached 567 million, an increase of 3.3 per cent over 1994. International tourist revenue reached \$3,720 billion in 1995, and studies published in 1996 projected the revenue for the year 2000 at \$8,000 billion. Using masses of tourists to contribute to peace and understanding may be the international tourism community's best plan yet.

How to get there

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet
Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramses Street and Cairo Airport.
Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurgada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter.
Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurgada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Marsa Matruh
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36.
Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32.
Cairo-Port Said
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.50pm, from Almaza, then Ramses Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said
Services 6.45am, from Ramses Square to Alexandria, Depart Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurgada
Services 8am and 3pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurgada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm; LE43 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurgada
Service 8pm, from Ramses Square, Alexandria, Departs Hurgada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 1pm. Tickets LE24 each way.
East Delta Bus Company
Buses travel to North Sinai, South Sinai, Suez and Ismailia, buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qutail (near Ramses Square), Almaza and Tugaid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qutail, then Almaza and Tugaid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE23, one way.

Cairo-Suez
Services every half an hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qutail, then Almaza and Tugaid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE23.75; air-conditioned bus LE25, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qutail, then Almaza and Tugaid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE23, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27.

Trains

Cairo-Marsa Matruh
Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE21.

West Delta Bus Company
Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurgada
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safage
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Quatre
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan
Service 3pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Cairo-Alexandria
"Tahiti" trains
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.
Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 3pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE23; second class LE17.

"French" trains
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

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مكتزا من الأصل

هكذا من الإحلال



Chris Eubank, holder of the 1991 Super Middle Weight title



Eubank enjoying a camel ride during a visit to the Pyramids of Giza

Eubank is back

A LITTLE over a year after his retirement, British boxer Chris Eubank is set to knock the boxing world on its ear as he returns to the ring in a fight to be held in the indoor halls of the Cairo Stadium. Eubank was full of punch as he arrived in Cairo on 3 October to commence training at the Madi Olympic Centre for Al-Ahram Organisation sponsored event. The former Super Middle Weight Champion, famous for his dramatic entrances atop a motorcycle, is set to slug it out with Argentina's top-ranked and former South American champion Luis Dionisio Barrera in the 19 October match.

Al-Ahram, fresh from its success sponsoring international squash and handball tournaments, signed the boxer last July after gaining the approval of the World Boxing Organisation (WBO), and the Arab Boxing Federation.

Eubank, known in Britain as "Simply the Best", will raise the profile of middle weight boxing in Egypt as he stages his "Style on the Nile" come back before the cameras for the international television broadcast of the bout. The Briton first gained distinction after winning the 1990 Middle Weight Championship and a year later took the Super Middle Weight title. The boxer, from the seaside town of Brighton, is well known for his fund raising activities on behalf of children's charities and speaking engagements at local schools in the UK.

Eubank quit the ring following the controversial September 1995 split decision bout against Ireland's Steven Collins which cost him the title. At the time Eubank was quoted as saying "the sport of boxing is dirty, the competition is unfair... If I knew that fact from the beginning, I would never have practised it at all".

At a recent press conference in Cairo the boxer explained his decision to put on the gloves once again saying "Boxing is my area of excellence and what I do with ease. Watch, read, listen and learn, Eubank is back."



Disembarking at Cairo Airport



At the Cairo Stadium indoor halls where the event will take place

Out with the old

Last week, Cairo hosted the 10th Arab Volleyball Championship at Ahli Club's indoor halls. **Abeer Anwar** reports

The 10th Arab Volleyball Championships came to a conclusion last week in Cairo with Tunisia taking the title. Egypt, as erstwhile title holder and host, was joined by five other countries — Qatar, Lebanon, Algeria, Tunisia, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia — for the senior championships in which Qatar emerged as the new kid on the block.

The competitions were nearly a walk through for Tunisia in both the seniors and juniors events as they took all of their four matches to be crowned the champions. The Tunisians were followed by Qatar in second place, Algeria third and Egypt in fourth.

The Egyptian national team got off to a good start defeating Lebanon 3-0 in their first match. However, as valiantly as they tried to retain the title, the team was unable to bounce back from the towering they received from Qatar in their second match.

Qatar was the surprise star team of the event, beating not only Egypt but also long time rivals Saudi Arabia for the first time in 20 years. The Qataris' best Algeria 3-2 to take second place. Although the Egyptian national team initially appeared relaxed and in control of the first set against Qatar, they lost the match 3-2. Qatar's technical manager, Gorn G-U-Pyo of Korea summed up the team's success on the defensive strategy adopted by the players. "Egypt's players are very tall so we resorted to defence and the quick spikes of Mubarak El-D," he said.

Egypt struggled to defeat Saudi Arabia 3-1 in what was the team's last opportunity to escape the humiliation of a last place standing.

The fallout from the disappointing results for the national team is still being felt as Egyptian Volleyball Federation head, Dr. Amr Elwan, announced the sacking of the technical committee for the national teams. The next championship will see many new faces as the federation also announced the disavowal of the national team. Italian advisor, Pittera Carmelo is likewise out on the job market after he came under particular criticism for the lacklustre playing of the national squad.

The players are vexed that they are to be penalised for what they view as the result of circumstances beyond their control. They point out that they were unable to compete against strong teams in closed camps abroad prior to the championships. The team had been training at the Olympic Centre at Madi and only had access to a camp at Ras El-Bar. "Since April, the team has not played any strong matches with other teams," commented former national team technical man-

ager Pittera Carmelo.

The best player and spiker titles went to Qatar's Eid who expressed his happiness at collecting two titles in one event. "I am very pleased that my training resulted in two titles and the silver medal for my country and I hope in the next competition we will be able to surpass all by beating Tunisia," commented Eid. Tunisia swept the titles ceremony with Riyad Omar taking best play maker, Ghazi Youssef, best blocker, Nour Aladdin Haddad, best receiver and Mohamed Abdel-Qader, best defender.

In the juniors under-17 competition, 8 countries — Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Syria, Tunisia, the Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt — divided into two groups, participated in the event.

The two-week-old Egyptian team, in their first Arab contest, proved they were up to the task. Under the supervision of coach Nour Zaki, the team was able to beat the Emirates to place third after losing to Tunisia in the semi-final. The results were Tunisia first, Bahrain second, and Egypt third.

"It is the team's first challenge and they were up to it especially since they were the only Egyptian team to stand on the medals podium and collect the bronze," said an elated Zaki.

In a repeat of the seniors ceremony, Tunisia again snatched the majority of the titles with Mervan Al-Qabir named best spiker and player and Riyad Al-Hadi best play-maker. Egypt's Ramey Mahmoud was named best receiver; Qatar's Othman Hassan, best blocker; Bahraini Ahmed Ali, best defender and the Emirates' Ali Salem was named best server.

Parallel to the Arab Championship, the African qualifications for the 1997 World Cup to be held in Indonesia for the women's under-17 team were held at the indoor halls of the Cairo Stadium. Egypt's team was unable to rally for a win and did not qualify for the World Cup. "The team did its best but they did not train with any foreign teams and its first contact was in this championship," said national team coach Hisham Badrawi. Mauritius placed first, followed by Tunisia in second and Egypt in third. The Nigerian team, despite beating both Mauritius and Tunisia, missed their opening match against Egypt and had their results cancelled by the technical committee for late arrival.

Edited by Inas Mazhar

Cannonball express

A new race will take place in the Western Desert to replace the Rally of the Pharaohs. **Eman Abdel-Moeti** reports

dunes, is that you can never tell whether your car is going up or down, or whether you have a slope ahead of you," explained Sherif Saleh, an Egyptian driver.

The Desert Cannonball diverges slightly from the usual Cannonball race, as Egyptian organiser Mustafa El-Nahas explained: "The Cannonball is a race of freedom and a type of desert race that should be of one phase; the participants should race to the finish line without a break. And that is what we aimed for when we began preparing for it last year.

But after taking safety considerations into account, the organisers thought it better if the route to Abu-Simbel was divided into three stages whereas the way back would be only one phase from Abu-Simbel to Cairo."

A new device, the "black box", will be used to track the vehicles in case of accidents or should they stray off course. The black box is attached to each vehicle and beams data to satellites. They in turn transmit the information to a screen in the main control room for the race and to the helicopters that trail the drivers along the course of the race.

At the end of each of the first three phases, checkpoints will be set up where the support team of each participant will be able to provide spare parts and make any necessary repairs. The checkpoint stops are, however, at the discretion of the driver. The support teams will not be available to the driver on the Abu-Simbel-Cairo route. This will be the most dangerous part of the race especially in the event of a breakdown. The participants will retrace their route on the way from Abu-Simbel until they reach Kharga Oasis where they will

head towards Fayoum to the north. The drivers will then skirt Wadi Rayan, which has been declared a natural preserve.

A relatively fewer number of participants are expected than for previous races and most will be amateurs. The drivers cite the lack of publicity and support for the low turnout.

Only four Egyptian drivers — Amr Shanan, Sherif Saleh, Khaled Taki, and Ra'ed Baddar — are taking part. "It is a pity that when all of Europe has known about this year's race, we the Egyptian participants did not know about it until recently," complained Khaled Taki, who holds the highest rank among Egyptian drivers (13th in the 1993 Pharaohs Rally).

Although some would argue that the sport of desert racing is harmful to the ecology of the desert, others point out that the races actually raise the awareness of the environment.

Amr Shanan, a veteran participant in the Pharaohs rally, is known for his green (for greenery) and blue (for the sea) Cherokee. Shanan, the first Egyptian driver to call for the conservation of the environment through the awareness brought by desert rallies, explained that this year's Cannonball will be a way to explore new areas in the desert that may need to be declared natural protectorates. To back his claim he points out that Wadi Rayan was declared a natural preserve only after the Rally of the Pharaohs made the area popular.

According to Wael Abed, one of the race organisers, Mogharra Lake is expected to be declared a natural preserve by the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency.

"Desert rallies are not about challenging nature but rather respecting nature and trying to overcome its perils by studying and understanding it," said Shanan.

Sherif Saleh, who has driven in the rallies for over a decade and placed 23rd in 1991, said, "Give any car participating in the race five minutes after it has gone, and you won't find a trace of it on the sand or in the air."



Hassan's header

A LAST-minute header for the goal by Hossam Hassan saved the Egyptian national squad from sure defeat by the Moroccan team in an African nations qualifier match which took place at the Cairo Stadium on Sunday. The match, ending in an 1-1 draw, was the first for both teams in the first-leg of the African qualifications. Egypt, a member of group 3, along with Ethiopia, Senegal, and Morocco, drew while Senegal defeated Ethiopia 2-1 at Addis Ababa.

Football fans began converging on the stadium three hours before the beginning of the match and swelled into an over-capacity crowd numbering at least 100,000 at the 76,000 seat stadium.

At the outset it was difficult to predict a winner, as both teams exhibited a caution resembling that of a finals match rather than a qualifier. Fortunately for the spectators the match quickly metamorphosed into a thrilling encounter as the Moroccans sought to avenge the defeat handed out by the Egyptian clubs teams — Ahli, Zamalek, and Arab Contractors — to the Moroccans in the Arab and African championships last month.

The absence of a talented home-grown striker and scorer, with the exception of team super-star Hossam Hassan, obviously had a negative impact on the game on the Egyptian side.

As a result, the outcome for the Egyptian national team in the upcoming African and world cup qualifications is hard to foresee. The second leg is scheduled to take place next January.

Technical talk about dams is seldom riveting, but the man most conversant with Aswan's High Dam tackles the subject with gusto

Zaki Qenawi: Dam discourse

Still on his feet at 95, laughing heartily, taking everything in and possessing an exceptionally sharp memory, Ibrahim Zaki Qenawi is an inspiration. He has a photographic memory, he says. "I look at a telephone number and remember the numbers visually. I do not try to think hard about the number itself. I see it in my mind," he explained when I expressed surprise that a man of his age remembers dates, people and places so clearly. "My memory is far sharper than that of much younger men," he chuckled with unrestrained glee.

Qenawi is robust for his age. With the aid of a cane he insisted on walking me to the door of his flat in Mohandessin at the end of a brisk three hour discussion at our first meeting. Other meetings no less vigorous were to follow. Apart from his slightly impaired sight and difficulties with hearing, he is fine for a man of his years. "I always got up at six and was at my desk by seven — even when I was a minister," Qenawi mused.

The most impressive characteristic of the nonagenarian is his irrepressible good humour. He speaks his mind and especially so these days as he is getting on in years. Perseverance, he insists, accounts for his longevity. "I always fought failure with all my strength. I pressed on until I accomplished my goals. I've always finished tasks on time," he boasted.

The Aswan High Dam was his most acclaimed accomplishment. A former minister of public works and water resources, Qenawi is proud that he was instrumental in the construction of the Aswan High Dam. He is the one living authority who knows about the dam more than anyone else. "The Aswan High Dam is no white elephant," Qenawi insists. "I hope the day will not come when Egypt would yearn for a single drop of water, and not find it except in the teardrops of her sons," he said. "We desperately need every drop of water," he added.

This week, Lake Nasser rose to its highest level since the construction of the dam in May 1964. "Without the Aswan High Dam the flood waters would have proved catastrophic," he said. He was born during the days when alternate years of disastrous floods and ruinous droughts were commonplace. The Nile waters were a blessing for Egypt, but they were often also a bane. Irregular water supplies hampered agricultural development. The electrification of rural Egypt was an unthinkable feat in early years of the century when Qenawi was growing up in the Delta. Today, the Aswan High Dam provides about half of Egypt's power supplies. It is for these reasons that Qenawi believes that the dam is the magnum opus of the 1952 Revolution.

"There were those who said that the dam was a mad idea. But, they were proven wrong," Qenawi said. "The construction of the dam was a strategic imperative. Nasser felt that it was a battle for survival," Qenawi said. Nasser regarded the construction of the Aswan High Dam as a challenging battle," Qenawi said. "The dam was a prerequisite for rural development and for Egypt's industrialisation programme," he added.

Lake Nasser, with a surface area of over 5,000 square kilometres, is a fresh water reservoir with a maximum capacity of some 164 billion cubic metres. Qenawi does not believe that its banks should be exploited for agricultural or industrial activities. "We should not pollute Lake Nasser," he stressed. "We must learn how to develop and manage our meagre water resources. Discharges of industrial and domestic wastes pollute the River Nile," Qenawi said.

As for the ongoing project to divert excess water from Lake Nasser to the Toshki Canal, Qenawi takes exception: "I believe that the Toshki project is redundant. It is a waste of water," Qenawi said. "I have told the authorities so," he snarled, visibly angered as he quivered waving a reputable newspaper with a recently published article about Toshki. "We must conserve our water. The excess water that will be siphoned off the spill-over and into the Toshki Canal will be evaporated in the desert sands. The soil in the Toshki depression is unsuitable for agriculture," he fumed.

Qenawi held a vitally important political position as cabinet minister under the late President Gamal Abdel-Nasser, but he wholly detached himself from the various interminable power struggles that went on within the Arab Socialist Union of the 1960s and 1970s. As a member of Nasser's last cabinet — he was minister of public works and water resources — and as a former chairman of the High Dam Authority, Qenawi made many foreign friendships. "Nasser was keen on us entertaining foreign dignitaries and diplomats," he said. Qenawi was a president of the Cuban Arab Friendship Association and a member of many other similar organisations.

In October 1968, Israel bombed the barrage and town of Nagga' Hammadi in Upper Egypt. "Sami Sharaf, then Nasser's secretary, phoned me in the dead of night. I rushed to Nasser's office," Qenawi reminisces. "I showed Nasser and cabinet ministers a model of the barrage and the damage done. Nasser insisted that I travel immediately to Nagga' Hammadi to repair the damage. I took a taxi from Mohandessin to Upper Egypt. By sheer luck, the driver happened to be from El-Bahiana — a few kilo-

metres away from Nagga' Hammadi. I paid 30 Egyptian pounds, which was a huge sum in those days. To this day, I haven't been refunded," Qenawi smiles.

In July 1977, Qenawi tendered his resignation from his job at the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction. He headed the Central Reconstruction Department of the ministry and doubled as the reconstruction adviser to the minister. Why did he resign? "I did not like how things were run. I disapproved of the so-called open-door policies advocated by Sadat. There were many people in a position of power and privilege who were dishonest and who profited from dubious schemes and unsound projects," Qenawi said. This was not his first resignation, in 1970 he resigned his ministerial post.

He shies away from political discussions — especially those that revolve around sensitive domestic issues. But, he is strongly opinionated when it comes to foreign policy — especially concerning the protection of Egypt's interests and rights to the Nile waters. He contends that dealing with Sudan over sharing water resources was often difficult in the past.

He concedes that there have been misunderstandings about sharing the Nile waters between Egypt and its African neighbours. "It is natural for upstream countries to have disagreements and a cautionary mistrust of downstream countries like Egypt," Qenawi said referring to disputes between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia over the exploitation of the Nile's waters. "The Nile should be a uniting not a dividing factor," he said.

"Sudan vehemently opposed the construction of the Aswan High Dam. Egypt paid 15 million Egyptian pounds in compensation for the submerging of Sudan's northernmost city, Wadi Halfa, under Lake Nasser. However strong historical ties bind us to Sudan forever," Qenawi said.

Then he touches on another raw nerve — the regional rivalry for control over the Nile waters. "Egypt spent over 20 million Egyptian pounds on the construction of the Jonglei Canal in southern Sudan, but Sudan procrastinated over the completion of the vital project that will save some five billion cubic metres of fresh water that could be shared equally between Egypt and Sudan. The civil war in southern Sudan brought the project to an abrupt halt," he added.

Qenawi feels strongly about the ecological problems facing Egypt and the Middle East. He urges the adoption of sound ecological policies. Barring a few Western Desert oases, the River Nile is Egypt's only source of fresh water. "The notion that Egypt sits atop a huge reservoir of under-

ground water is simply not true. I said it before and I'll say it again: Egypt is not sitting atop a limitless underground water reservoir," Qenawi said. He is very passionate about his advocacy of water conservation.

The building of the Aswan High Dam was full of paradox. Not everyone was happy. But Qenawi is very defensive when it comes to his pet subject — the dam. He has no time for its many critics. "It is said that the Nubians lost out," I ventured. "On the contrary, they were relocated, and housed in spacious and comfortable buildings with many modern amenities such as electricity and running water. We made sure that the Nubians' new homes in Kom Ombo and elsewhere were modeled after their ancient social and architectural traditions — down to the *zir* (traditional water container) and its lid," he countered. The desert tightly embracing the Nubian Nile Valley is one of the world's harshest places. The narrow strip of land on the left and right banks of the Nile was submerged in Lake Nasser. "The old Nubia was never a very productive land," Qenawi claims.

"On 8 October 1952, the newly installed Revolutionary Command Council commissioned a feasibility study group to look into the possibility of building a gigantic dam on the Nile. The Aswan High Dam International Committee was set up. I was a member of the International Committee. By 4 December 1954, the International Committee gave the green light for the project to go ahead. Nasser proceeded immediately with the construction plans. I was asked to help," Qenawi said.

Egypt approached the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) to fund the Aswan High Dam project early in 1955. After a thorough evaluation of the costs and benefits of the project, the IBRD approved financing it. But, on 19 July 1956, the IBRD suddenly reneged on its earlier promises. Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal Company on 26 July 1956. Britain, France and Israel retaliated by waging the tripartite aggression against Egypt on 26 October 1956. The rest, as they say, is history.

Egypt signed an agreement with the former Soviet Union on 27 December 1958. The High Dam Authority was responsible for the execution of the Aswan High Dam. Othman Ahmed Othman, an Arab Contractors Company and Misr Concrete Corporation were among the most important Egyptian firms that carried out excavations, the de-

velopment of rock quarries, concrete production and the building of the dam's body. "Rock excavation began with the inauguration of the project on 9 January 1960 when Nasser blasted the first charge of explosives for the excavation of the diversion canal," he said.

Qenawi was over the moon. His joy knew no bounds. He was a workaholic in those days. For much of this time his wife and three children were in Cairo while he worked some 18 hours a day overseeing the construction of the dam. "A dam is begun by digging a trench in a bedrock foundation. Next an initial waterproof layer of compressed clay is laid down. Nasser used to enjoy exploring the trenches and dam site tunnels. I used to give him a guided tour of the nether world underneath the Nile," Qenawi mused.

Work on the actual dam structure began on 9 January 1963 when Nasser threw the first granite stone into the Nile. Qenawi remembers that day well. "We worked very hard in those days. There were no holidays, no Ramadan, no feasts, and no Fridays," he chuckled. Eventually, some six million tons of sand were sluiced in the Nile. Nasser arranged for overseas visitors to tour the site. Qenawi was often in charge of showing such visitors around. He knew the area like the back of his hand — tunnels, stone crushing plants, concrete mixing plants, cement silos, upstream canal, downstream canal, cofferdams, the whole lot. "We had very few technicians then. We invited 1,500 technicians from the former Soviet Union. Over 2,000 Egyptian technicians were trained on the job in Aswan. So only 200 Russian technical experts were left in the country.

Born in Shebeen El-Kom, Menoufiya, in the heart of the Nile Delta, his father died when he was at the tender age of six. He

went to school pretty late. "Those were the days of the Kutabs — Quranic schools," he explained. "Everybody went to school late in those days, and especially in rural areas," he added. As it turned out, he loved school and was a very bright pupil, excelling in mathematics and physics.

Constructions are the love of his life. "Even as a child in rural Menoufiya I had an eye for irrigation canals. I was fascinated by the mechanics of irrigation," Qenawi said. As a child he loved mathematics and algebra which put him in good stead when he became interested in engineering at university. In 1924 Qenawi graduated from Fouad I, oow Cairo University, with a bachelors degree in engineering. In 1931 he received a masters degree in civil engineering with distinction from Cambridge University, England. He left Egypt in 1948 to study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Qenawi is a self-made man. "I paid my way through college in America," he remembered with a proud smile. "It was easier in those days," he said. Four years after his departure he earned a Ph.D.

Qenawi is well-traveled. "I have been to over 40 different countries," he mused. In Syria he helped construct dams on the River Euphrates and lived several years there during the days that Egypt and Syria were one country — the United Arab Republic. He also has very fond memories of the Far East and especially China. The walls of his otherwise austere living room are decorated with the most exquisite Chinese silk paintings. One of the memories he holds dear is when he saw thousands of peasant labourers digging irrigation canals and constructing a dam with their bare hands in rural China in the mid-1970s. "It was unforgettable."

Profile by Gamal Nkrumah

Pack of cards

by Madame Sosostriis



Nafie, Tatawi and guests at the opening

Did you happen to pass by Al-Ahram building last Monday? If you hadn't, then you missed seeing me attending a most inspiring exhibition, that of the artistic work of members of the Association of War Veterans which took place in Al-Ahram lobby. It was officially opened by Chairman of the Board and Chief Editor of *Al-Ahram* Ibrahim Nafie and Minister of Economy Nawal El-Tatawi. The exhibition will remain open until the 17th.



Not only does he inform, educate and fascinate, but it is my conviction that Mohammed Hassan El-Helal has earned the title of 'Keeper of our Arab national memory'. This is perhaps the most salient feature of his latest work, issued earlier this year in English by Harper Collins under the title, *Secret Channels: The Inside Story of Arab-Israeli Peace Negotiations*. Sure, the book is brimful of un-, or previously little-known facts. This, we have come to expect from a work by Helikal, who has managed to keep himself informed of a great deal of what goes on behind-the-scenes in regional and international politics, despite having spent more than 20 years away from the corridors of power. Helikal, however, marshals the facts, well-little- or previously unknown, not only to provide us with a deep understanding of where we have been, and where we are heading, but also to remind us of that which we are continuously being made to forget, of what perhaps some of us would like all of us to forget. The Arabic edition of *Secret Channels* was issued in three parts, all under the general heading: "Secret Negotiations between the Arabs and Israel". The last part of the trilogy, which deals with Palestinian-Israeli negotiations under the title: "The peace of illusions: Oslo, before and after", hit bookshops and newsstands this week. The timing could not have been more opportune, coming one week after Netanyahu's extremism put the Oslo Agreements' shortcomings in bold relief.

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National Council for Culture
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<p>Cairo 18 and 17 October, 1996 Aida Open Air Theatre, Cairo Opera House, 8:00 pm Tickets LE 15 from the Opera House box office</p>	<p>Alexandria 18 October, 1996 Sayed Darwish Theatre Fouad Street, 8:00 pm Free admission by invitation from the British Council, Alexandria</p>	<p>Luxor 20 October, 1996 Luxor Temple, 7:00 pm Free admission</p>
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